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# THE POISONED CROWN

By HUGH KINGSMILL

"All power corrupts" said Lord Acton, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely". *The Poisoned Crown* is a study of this corruption, the violence wrought in the persons themselves through the exercise of absolute power and the effect of this subtle deterioration of character upon their acts and policies. In a long and brilliant introductory chapter entitled "The Genealogy of Hitler", Mr Kingsmill traces the ever increasing appetite for power in modern times from Rousseau's belief in natural virtue, growing through the nineteenth century to a belief in the possibility of communal salvation, and hence, into the urgency of compulsory salvation.

The four subjects of Mr. Kingsmill's examination are Elizabeth, Cromwell, Napoleon and Lincoln. There is no attempt to fit them into a common formula, for the author holds that every historical crisis requires a different type of person through whom its characteristic needs can be expressed.

The title is derived from a quotation from Blake: "*The strongest poison ever known, came from Caesar's laurel crown*".



## THE POISONED CROWN

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# THE POISONED CROWN

By  
HUGH KINGSMILL

"The strongest poison ever known  
Came from Caesar's laurel crown."

WILLIAM BLAKE.



EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE  
LONDON: 1944



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE  
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED  
ECONOMY STANDARDS

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## The Genealogy of Hitler

### I

MOST of the avoidable suffering in life springs from our attempts to escape the unavoidable suffering inherent in the fragmentary nature of our present existence. We expect immortal satisfactions from mortal conditions, and lasting and perfect happiness in the midst of universal change. To encourage this expectation, to persuade mankind that the ideal is realisable in this world, after a few preliminary changes in external conditions, is the distinguishing mark of all charlatans, whether in thought or action. In the middle of the eighteenth century Johnson wrote: "We will not endeavour to fix the destiny of kingdoms: it is our business to consider what beings like us may perform." A little later Rousseau wrote: "Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains." Johnson's sober truth kindled no one, Rousseau's seductive lie founded the secular religion which in various forms has dominated Europe since Rousseau's death.

Although tinged with a vague deism, Rousseau's religion of the natural man treated this life as essentially a complete and self-contained experience, a view which tends to stimulate both self-glorification and Utopianism. The *Confessions* of Rousseau opened with the claim that he was a unique individual. Frustrated and embittered, he could mitigate the unsatisfactoriness of his appearance on the stage of life only by pitting his singularity against the featureless mediocrity of the indifferent world. At the same time, partly out of a desire to blame circumstances for his wretchedness, and partly out of that feeling of solidarity with the general life which even the most obdurate egotist feels until he is required to translate it into action, Rousseau looked forward to an earthly paradise in which a liberated humanity would attain the felicity denied to those born, like him, into the night of privilege, tyranny and greed; for Utopianism is the transference to society of the individual's disappointed expectation of personal happiness.

Rousseau's gospel found its first practical expression in the French Revolution, which followed the usual course of Utopianism in action—wild rejoicing among the masses at the destruction of old abuses and the ruin of their oppressors, the improvisation of a new order, the necessity in the general confusion for ruthless methods of imposing it, the increasingly rapid elimination of those Utopians in whom humanity was

stronger than practical sense, the welcome threat of foreign intervention and ensuing diversion of revolutionary passion, now a menace to the Utopians at the top, into patriotic fervour, and finally a military dictatorship and a series of crusades against reactionary neighbours. Out of this welter emerged a figure well suited to be the god of the new religion and the new century. Napoleon's first appeal to men's imaginations was as a liberator, and even after he mounted a higher throne than any he had overturned, he was still to millions the man of the people who had avenged their agelong sufferings and humiliations. This view of him, blurred during his later years of power, blossomed again as soon as he was dead. In 1814 the poet laureate, Robert Southey, called him "Remorseless, godless, full of frauds and lies, and black with murders and with treacheries"; and the *Times* lamented that no description could more than faintly portray the foul and ghastly features of the grim idol worshipped by the French. A few years later, when the news of his death reached England, the *Times*, after regretting that he had not used his extraordinary gifts to better purpose, noted mildly that he was steady and faithful in his friendships, and not vindictive even when he could have been so with impunity. Since this could be written in 1821, it is not surprising that as the century advanced his exile became a martyrdom, and that before the close of the century Prometheus on his rock and even Christ in Gethsemane were being invoked to measure the extremity of Napoleon's dereliction on St Helena. Mixed with this view of him as a supremely tragic figure, the baffled liberator of mankind, was adoration of him as the Man of Destiny, the incarnation of will-power, ruthless and irresistible. The two aspects complemented each other, and together formed a god.

Byron soon joined Napoleon in the new pantleon. The uprush of energy in the second half of the eighteenth century had poured itself into poetry as well as action, and for a short period, poised between the age of reason and the age of romance, the mist which veils reality thinned in a few imaginations. Mozart and Beethoven, Blake and Goethe and Wordsworth, wrote as representatives of mankind, not as unique specimens of it; their work was inspired not by their own singularity but by the whole of which they felt themselves to be parts. It meant little to most people, and the stirring of men's minds and imaginations by the Revolution and Napoleon had to be satisfied on a different level.

Like Napoleon, Byron possessed the twofold appeal of a liberator and an embodiment of the untrammelled will. His politics were of the usual revolutionary kind. He expected nothing from the world as it was, and everything from the world as it was shortly to be—"Give me



PLATE 1 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU  
From the painting by Mauzaisse



PLATE 2. NAPOLEON  
From a sketch by David



PLATE 3. BYRON, 1813-14  
After the painting by R. Westall  
(*Crown Copyright Reserved*)



PLATE 4. HEINE, 1827  
After the drawing by Ludwig Grimm

a republic. The king times are fast finishing; there will be blood shed like water and tears like mist, but the peoples will conquer in the end." In the opinion of the public his death at Missolonghi proved the sincerity of his love for freedom; and his disinterestedness being thus established, it was possible to surrender without qualms to the spell of his egotism. In his essay on Byron Macaulay wondered why egotism, so distasteful in personal intercourse, should be so attractive in poetry. The explanation (to borrow one of Macaulay's formulas) is a very simple one. The reader identifies himself with the poet; and the readers of Byron, even when not in mere fact of noble birth and young and beautiful, fatal to all they loved, lonely wanderers over high mountains and misunderstood roamers on far-off strands, quickly became all these things in fancy. In the vacuum created by Napoleon's downfall Byron's image of himself enchanted all Europe, and the star-crossed lover took his place beside the star-crossed conqueror as the second of the two divinities presiding over the new age.

2

In his preface to *Ruy Blas*, which appeared in 1838, Victor Hugo wrote that the hero of the play was not Ruy Blas, but the people "without a present, but looking to the future; humble in station, yet aspiring high, and with the premonition of genius." Hugo, in the direct line of descent from Rousseau through Napoleon and Byron, was both a unique personality and a Utopian, but, as this quotation suggests, he was aware that romantic individualism, symbolised by Ruy Blas, was on the wane, and that Utopianism was becoming the more important element in a great man's make-up. The age of progress had set in, applied science was multiplying the comforts of life, and the masses, temporarily suppressed after Waterloo, were beginning to stir again.

The rich, too, were looking to the future, but with a premonition of trouble, not of genius. Increasingly aware of the poor ever since the Revolution, they were trying to reassure themselves by crediting the man in the street with exactly those virtues which he had patently failed to exhibit during the Terror. As employees infer a fine nature in the head of a firm on evidence which would not raise the office boy in their esteem, so from 1789 onwards the well-to-do began to detect high qualities in what they now called "the sovereign people." "Poor but honest," a realistic phrase previously in common use, was seldom heard after the Revolution, and the possessing classes inclined instead to the fallacy that because saints are usually poor men, therefore poor men are usually saints.

A less sweeping and majestic witness to the emergence of the people than Hugo, but a more perceptive one, was Heine. A German Jew, whose later years were spent in France, he had a wider range of experience than Hugo, and reflected the changing spirit of the age more completely perhaps than any other writer in the second quarter of the century. The heroes of his youth were Byron and Napoleon, Byron with his broken heart and unbroken will, and Napoleon who had abolished the Ghettos of Germany and scourged the hated Prussians, but had perished at last, as all great spirits perish, in vain conflict with the insensate hostility of the world. For Heine himself at this time the hostility of the world was expressed in the indifference to his love of a beautiful cousin, and the indifference to his poverty of her father, a rich Hamburg banker. A luckless Atlas bearing on his shoulders the whole world's woe was how he saw himself when he was feeling like Napoleon, and a poet whose songs and sorrows were on every German tongue when he was feeling like Byron. The charm of the Romantic age, as well as its closely interwoven foolishness, suffused these early verses, with their nostalgia for far-off lands and ages, their nightingales echoing the poet's pain, their moonlit waters and fairy-haunted woods, and at the end of every vista death, the goal of all desire because its only cure. But the poet lived on, and, like Byron in *Don Juan*, began to correct false sentiment with cynicism, using a jarring last line to let daylight into the moonshine. As his humour and his emotions became more harmonised he dropped this trick, which, however, expressed his permanent feeling of the antithesis between truth and beauty. Beauty was the romantic illusion he and his age had outgrown, truth the repulsive reality they could no longer evade; and by truth he meant the nature of things as they are experienced in the ordinary course of life. He was willing to believe that life could be beautiful in other lands, or had been beautiful in other ages, or even in his own youth when Byron and Napoleon were still on earth. But now the mob was in the ascendant, the drab era of the sovereign people was beginning. As a poet, and therefore by romantic convention an aristocrat, the prospect disgusted him. As a Utopian, a "soldier in the liberation war of humanity," as he called himself, he welcomed it. For a year or two in the eighteen-forties he was a close friend of Karl Marx, whose political philosophy he condensed into a few stanzas of a satirical poem called "Deutschland." The people, that great booby (he wrote), had been fooled long enough by the old hymn of renunciation, the lullaby of heaven, with its promise of a world up there to recompense them for all their suffering below. He had a new, a better, hymn to sing. Let them build the kingdom of

heaven here on earth. There was bread, and cakes, enough for every man. Leave heaven to the angels and the sparrows.

With this prevision of the Bolshevik millennium went the craving for violence which is induced by a glut of material well-being, whether in fancy or in fact. In a famous passage he warned France to beware of the hammer of Thor which Germany, breaking through its crust of Christianity, would bring crashing down on the cathedrals of Christendom; but though he loved France and civilised life there was a note of exultation in the warning. Give me bloody and colossal crimes (he cried in one of his poems), but not this snug virtue of solvent traders; and in another poem he hailed Germany as a child whom its nurse, the sun, was suckling not with milk but wild flames, and on whose forehead a diamond-studded crown would presently be sparkling.

## 3

While Heine was looking backwards with regret and forwards with a mixture of repulsion and excitement, Balzac was carving an epic out of the new age of money and machines. He was not a Utopian. With his vast appetite for the concrete, the present was feast enough for him. But he was intensely romantic. His ambition, he said, was to achieve with his pen what Napoleon had achieved with his sword. He wanted to pass the whole of life through his imagination, and stamp his picture of it on every mind. It was the hallucination of a man whose enormous natural vitality had been stimulated throughout a childhood and youth passed in Napoleon's world, and galvanised into delirium by the conquest of matter which in the second quarter of the century seemed to all Europe to prelude a millennium of earthly felicity. In England this illusion was still strongly tinged by Christianity. "Commerce, till lately comparatively inert," an Oxford graduate wrote in 1854, "is springing and running and flying with a more rapid motion of every limb, no longer dependent on the slowness of road-travel or the fitfulness of breezes, but self-propelled by the living and roaring leviathan within her bosom. . . . We have celebrated the festival of material civilisation in the great Exhibition of the nations' industry, and called all the ends of the earth to unite with us in patient and laborious progress. It was a noticeable fact, that in a bay of that Exhibition was a stand of books open to all readers; they were spread outside to attract the gaze of those who should pass by. It was the Book, the Word of God, the revelation of Christianity, published in more than a hundred languages of the nations of the earth. That fact is not a solitary or an isolated one; for

coaeval with the advance of commerce and of practical science there has taken place a mighty advance of Christianity." This was not how Balzac felt about the conquest of matter. Though a Catholic and Royalist, he was neither of those things out of a tenderness for religion or the past, but because in a country subject to revolutions a conservative theory of society seemed to him a necessary safeguard against the disruption and dispersal of the individual will which was symbolised for him in Napoleon. Though his books pulsate with energy and teem with life, there are really only two men in them: the man who is like Napoleon and the man who isn't. The first may be a country solicitor, a money-lender, or a gossip-writer on the Parisian press, but Balzac blows him out into a daemonic creature, grappling with society in a life-and-death struggle. The other man is a cross between a village idiot and Balzac's idea of Christ, which it is not easy to distinguish from the ordinary idea of a village idiot. There are also only two women: the one a ruthless, triumphant courtesan, the other a victimised Madonna.

The belief that goodness is due to an absence of will, not to a presence of spirit, expanded with the growing materialism of the age. Balzac, who died in 1850, could drop a tear over the hapless plight of virtue, but a few years later the philosophy deduced from Darwin's *Origin of Species* dignified egotism as the universal law of life. Confined within the material universe, spirit dismissed as an illusion, and matter elevated into the ultimate reality, the European mind turned to science as the sole repository of truth. The vastness of the universe, which so tormented Tennyson and which he was the first poet to feel and express, became a part of the general consciousness. Space and time, now absolute realities, stretched behind and before into sickening distances, and a feeling of his inexpressible insignificance descended upon man. This did not last long. His insignificance bred a sense of irresponsibility, his sense of irresponsibility a sense of power, and the net result of realising that he measured about six feet from end to end, as compared with the  $\infty$  billion miles of the universe, was greatly to increase his self-conceit. Rid of God, he felt himself superior to anything that remained, or at least to anything within view. This, however, was a collective feeling rather than an individual one, a huddling together of the herd in the presence of a mechanistic universe.

The descent of man from a spiritual being to a self-dependent personality, and from a self-dependent personality to a unit of the collective consciousness, was quickening fast—a change which sounds catastrophic, but which in practice was immensely modified by the fact that the mass of mankind is always swaying about between the highest and lowest



PLATT 5 HONORI DE BALZAC  
After Boulanger



PLATE 6. DOSTOEVSKY

conceptions of its nature, with flashes of divinity in an age of atheism and flashes of devilry in an age of religion. Nevertheless, the change portended great disasters, which in the twenty to thirty years following the *Origin of Species* were foreshadowed by Dostoevsky and Nietzsche.

4

The fundamental impulse in Dostoevsky's work was to dramatise the conflict in his nature between will-worship and spiritual freedom. When he wrote *Crime and Punishment*, will-worship was embodied for him in Napoleon and spiritual freedom in Christ; the hero of the book murdering an old woman in order to demonstrate his Napoleonic self-sufficiency, and repenting later under the influence of a prostitute who reads the Gospel of St John to him. In his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the conflict is less simply presented. There is a young priest, Alyosha, who is supposed to embody the spirit of universal love, but in spite of much effort by Dostoevsky he plays a minor and vapid part in the book. The true field of Dostoevsky's genius was not the heights of the human spirit but the depths of the human consciousness. He was most at home in the underworld, the literal one of St Petersburg, the metaphorical one of his own nature, and the most directly self-revealing of his stories, because the freest from false sentiment, is *Letters from the Underworld*, the confession of a small government official, shabby, insignificant and savagely resentful, whose longing for happiness and love is twisted into a devilish satisfaction in undeceiving and humiliating a prostitute who thinks she has found in him a refuge from the cruelty of life.

It was out of this inferno of perverted impulses, shot at intervals with gleams of spiritual insight, that the gospel of Dostoevsky rose into the upper air of the late nineteenth century, a strange exhalation which in the thickening twilight was mistaken for an apparition from heaven. Although what the Oxford graduate of 1854 had described as the triumph of patient and laborious progress was still in full spate, it inspired now less exultation than fear. In the more advanced countries of Europe the desire of the rich to think highly of the poor, to which Victor Hugo and Dickens had so freely ministered, was being more and more thwarted by the increasing demand of the poor for greater power and better conditions. No wonder, then, that in the closing decades of the century and the years before the war of 1914, western Europeans of the cultured classes turned with relief from labour organising itself for battle to Dostoevsky's vision of brotherly love among the uncomplaining Russian poor. It was among university professors and first-class civil servants,

popular novelists of the better sort and the lettered members of great banking and commercial families, that Dostoevsky's most ardent admirers were to be found. "The love which is in Dostoevsky's work," one of these admirers wrote, "is so great, so bountiful, so overflowing that it is impossible to find a parallel to it, either in ancient or in modern literature. Supposing the Gospel of St John were to be annihilated and lost to us for ever, although nothing could replace it, Dostoevsky's work would go nearer to replacing it than any other books written by any other man." What these enthusiasts divined in Dostoevsky was, on an enormously larger scale, their own guilt and fear and desire to placate an unknown and growing power. They, no more than Dickens or Victor Hugo or Dostoevsky, were attracted by the idea of self-chosen poverty. It was poverty as the great mass of mankind knows it that they wanted to be glorified as a privileged experience and a purifying destiny—a view of poverty which makes affluence seem almost a deprivation.

With the desire to idealise the masses is usually associated a desire to manage and use them, and it was this desire, stimulated by the growing collectivism of the age, which in Dostoevsky's last years blurred his earlier antithesis between Napoleon and Christ, producing a mixture of the two in which will-worship masqueraded as universal love. By this time Dostoevsky had become a fanatical nationalist, who was urging that Constantinople should be incorporated in the Russian Empire, beyond which relatively modest aim he saw the gradual absorption of the whole world by Russia. In a speech in honour of Pushkin, which he delivered just before his death and which aroused great popular enthusiasm, he said: "What is the strength of the Russian national spirit other than an aspiration towards a universal spirit which shall embrace the whole world and the whole of mankind? . . . To be a real Russian must signify simply this: to strive to bring about a solution and an end to European conflicts; to show to Europe a way to escape from its anguish in the Russian soul, which is universal and all-embracing; to instil into her a brotherly love for all men, and in the end perhaps to utter the great and final word of universal harmony, the fraternal and lasting concord of all people according to the gospel of Christ."

This totalitarian fantasy was his refuge from the panorama of malice, lust and despair which he displayed with all the intensity of his genius in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The clue to what in this last phase of his development he really felt about the masses is to be found not in his Pushkin speech but in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor which he inserted in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In this legend Christ returns to earth in the sixteenth century, and is brought before the Grand Inquisitor

in Seville. The Grand Inquisitor in a lengthy apologia presents himself as an enlightened sage, full of pity for the multitude, whom he directs and rules in their own interest, knowing them to be too weak for the burden of spiritual freedom imposed upon them by Christ. One would not, of course, expect a Calvin, a Torquemada or a Robespierre to present himself as a warped and savage soul which hates and seeks to destroy the happiness of others. But his true motives and impulses would be revealed incidentally as he talked. Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor is throughout unintermittently high-minded and disinterested, and even when he tells Christ that he must be killed, so that men may be saved from a gospel too hard for them, his majestic serenity remains unflawed by any gleam of satisfaction. Christ's response is to lean forward and kiss the Inquisitor on the lips; the Inquisitor shudders, and Christ passes out into the night, leaving the Inquisitor to roast his fellow-creatures in peace.

Like Dostoevsky's Christ, the Christs who round about this time made occasional appearances in the fiction of western Europe no longer contend against evil. Now and then a look of pain reveals their distress at wrong-doing, but their real business is to suggest that if the worst came to the worst, and there really should be another life, there would be loving-kindness enough and to spare for every one at the Day of Judgment.

## 5

The advisability of identifying oneself with some communal faith or activity was by the closing decades of the century clear to every one who wished to bring himself to the notice of the public. After 1870 even Wagner, the most flamboyant of romantic individualists, aligned his music with the aspirations of the new Germany. Ten years later, Dostoevsky became a Russian idol overnight with his speech on Pushkin, and in the next fifty years or so all the world-wide reputations, both in literature and in action, were made by men who drew attention to themselves by denouncing the individual and exalting the community—Shaw, Kipling and Wells, Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler.

Nietzsche reached maturity just as this landslide of self-effacing self-advancement was beginning to gather momentum, but he did not slide along with the rest. There was nothing of the opportunist in him, no point of contact with ordinary men. Of clerical stock on both sides, even in his childhood he was remote from life, earnest, scrupulous and thoughtful, with a budding didacticism which led the other children to call him "the little pastor." Living entirely in his mind, he could have jogged through the world comfortably enough as a professor, but for

his genius. There was an enormous power in him which could find nothing to feed on. His passions came to him in the form of ideas, he passed from one idea to another instead of from one experience to another, and for want of the balance between experience and thought which keeps genius sane collapsed at last under the unrelieved pressure of his thoughts on his emotions.

Looking at the world as a starving child looks through a window at people eating in a restaurant, he refused to blunt the pangs of his unsatisfied appetite with any hope of another life, or belief in a supernatural order. Matter was for him the only reality, the struggle and suffering of life were justified by the courage they evoked to endure them, only great individuals had any value, and the greatness of the individual was measured by the exaltation inspired in him by his tragic destiny. The philosophy which he based on this attitude and which he preached in his third and final stage was an extreme individualism, equally opposed to Christianity and to all forms of collectivism, democratic or nationalistic. Christianity he held to be a trick by which the herd had disarmed the aristocrat. Its humanitarianism was based not on love but on cowardice, it turned noble savages into sick monks, and hated and feared all that was strong and happy. Democracy, the modern secularised form of Christianity, levelled all superiorities. Slavery was essential to culture, and the enormous majority ought to be ruthlessly subjected to life's struggle, so that a select minority might expand without restraint. War he of course approved—"Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior." Yet he disliked Prussian nationalism only less than democratic pacifism, denouncing "this bovine nationalism" and warning Germany to free itself from "this fatal Prussia with its repugnance to culture." That the effective conduct of a war presupposes a strong collective emotion, and that nationalism is the form which a strong collective emotion necessarily takes when one country is fighting or preparing to fight another, clashed with his picture of glorious individuals hurling themselves into self-engendered frays. Reaching far out into the future, he found there a Utopia of his own, a world which had passed beyond the collectivism without tears of other founders of Utopia: "There, where the State ceaseth—pray look thither, my brethren! Do ye not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the Superman?" In this paradise of happy warriors, transfigured Caesar Borgias, resounding with "the final, cheerfulest, exuberantly maddest and merriest Yea to life," there would be a supreme wisdom of soul and body, a perfect harmonisation of joy and strength—"light feet, wit, fire, grave grand logic, stellar dancing, wanton intellectuality."



PLATE 7. NIETZSCHE ON HIS DEATH BED, FOLLOWING THE SINKING SUN  
From a drawing by Professor Hans Olde



PLATE 8 H. G. WELLS  
*(Copyright Reserved)*

This vision brought him no readers, one by one his friends were estranged by his growing conviction that he was destined to be the second and final saviour of mankind, and in his despair he turned back from his distant dream to the Europe of the later 'eighties, congested with prosperity and sick of progress. What could save it, he asked himself, and found the answer in the prospect of huge socialistic crises which would throw up the barbarians of the twentieth century to refresh and renovate an outworn world. "Would not the democratic movement itself," he wrote, "find a sort of goal, salvation, and justification, if someone appeared who availed himself of it, so that at last, besides its new and sublime product, slavery (for this would be the end of European democracy), that higher species of ruling and Caesarian spirits might also be produced, which would stand upon it, hold to it, and elevate themselves through it?"

Not long after this greeting to the collective frenzies he had tried to escape from in the dream of a Superman, at the beginning of 1889, a few months before the birth of Hitler, Nietzsche became insane.

6

In the year of Hitler's birth and Nietzsche's mental collapse, James Payn wrote to Conan Doyle, who had just brought out a story of the Monmouth Rebellion: "How can you, how can you, waste your time and wits writing historical novels?" The solid domestic themes which had made Anthony Trollope the most representative novelist of the 'sixties and 'seventies were still, in the opinion of a novelist well acquainted with popular taste, the most likely to please the public. Nevertheless, the first rumbling of the eruption against peace and prosperity and all the values summed up in the Victorian aphorism that the true knight of the modern world was the knight of commerce could already be heard. Kipling's Indian stories were coming out, Stevenson had written *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, Stanley Weyman's *A Gentleman of France*, ostensibly the history of a soldier of fortune in sixteenth-century France and really the daydream of a gentleman in late Victorian England, was soon to appear and sell in thousands, and Conan Doyle was about to become the medium through which the ordinary Englishman of the eighteen-nineties expressed most fully and variously his nostalgia for excitement and adventure. In his Sherlock Holmes stories Doyle peopled London with bizarre criminals, dotting a few over the countryside to suggest the horrors beneath its peaceful surface; and in other stories he ranged from diabolical pirates of the Spanish Main to murderous reanimated

mummies. In his mediæval romances he unrolled a landscape full of chivalrous knights and valiant bowmen, with here and there a flagellating hermit or white-livered clerk in holy orders. In *Rodney Stone* he pictured the bucks and bare-fist fighters of the Regency, and in his Napoleonic tales he resurrected the gigantic figure of Napoleon for, as he put it, "you who live so gently and peacefully now."

There was nothing of the revolutionary in Conan Doyle, a solid English individualist, or in Kipling, who early in his career attached himself to the ruling classes. In H. G. Wells, on the other hand, the element of violence was closely connected with his revolutionary sympathies. He was both generous and resentful by nature, but his early years of poverty deepened his resentment at the expense of his generosity. Overlooking the treatment saints and poets have received from churches and universities, he identified religion with the Church of England and culture with Oxford and Cambridge, and fell into a habit of disparaging the great men of the past as though they were merely dummies set up by snobs and pedants to intimidate the unlettered. His enthusiasm for science, a study disdained by the upper classes in his youth, was therefore not entirely impersonal, and his materialistic creed not the spontaneous exuberant materialism of the first half of the century, but a mixed product of a desire for power and of a dogged resistance to the spiritual element in his nature.

The hero of all his books, which fall into three categories, novels, scientific romances and Utopias, is the Little Man. In his early novels, based on his own youth, the Little Man is drawn with great humour, tenderness and warmth in his aspiration towards the happiness which life seems to hold for leisured and prosperous people. But Hoopdriver, Mr Lewisham and Kipps are not allowed to develop the confused poetry in their natures. Forced by his creed and by his own development to look for the kingdom of heaven anywhere except within the individual, Wells had either to give them money and position or leave them unblessed and unspoiled by prosperity. In his tenderness for them and deep obscure regret for what they still possessed and he had lost, he left them where they were, reserving for novels based, somewhat loosely, on his later years the transmogrification of the Little Man into a powerful figure in politics and big business. In his scientific romances, Wells transformed the Little Man into a magician, a being, that is, who concentrates on the mastery of natural forces and rejects spiritual development. Thus endowed, the Little Man ranges to the furthest limits of past and future time, flies to the moon, discovers the secret of invisibility, and turns himself into a giant. Some reality still adheres to him in these trans-

formations. His powers do not bring him much happiness, and from time to time he misuses them in outbursts of rage and destructiveness. In the Utopian fantasies, put forward by Wells as valuable contributions to political thought, the Little Man, leaving all reality behind him, takes wholesale vengeance on the insolent past, abolishing all nations, wiping out all religions, and erecting on the ruins a social order founded on applied science and enlightened sexual relations.

The Little Man as pictured by Wells in his best days passed away in 1914. Surfeited with the material triumphs of the previous hundred years, Europe was ready for an explosion, and the first effect of the war was a sense of overwhelming relief, to which the *Daily Mail* gave eloquent expression early in August 1914: "We of this generation are destined to see hours glorious beyond hope and imagination; we are already entering upon them. We have passed from the twilight of sloth and indulgence into the clear day of action and self-sacrifice." There was the same exaltation in Germany, where Thomas Mann spoke of the hearts of poets standing in flame, "for now it is war! . . . Nothing better, more beautiful, happier could befall them in the whole world." For the time being each of the warring nations was unified within itself, the external enemy became a symbol of the evil in life, the Little Man laid aside his resentments, and the rich man his pleasures and security.

Under the strain of the war revolution broke out in Russia, a worm-eaten autocracy ripe to yield to a new order in which the nineteenth-century illusions of progress and prosperity and the magical benefits of applied science could find fresh soil to blossom in. In the highly industrialised nations of western Europe, which Karl Marx had considered sufficiently well organised to be transferred at the right moment from bourgeois-capitalist control to the control of the proletariat, the chief effect of the infinite suffering of the war was a deep disillusionment with all the hopes engendered by the previous century. Materialism, once a solid daylight faith, now took strange shapes, lapsing into the dark night of the unconscious, the world of dreams and atavistic impulses, in which blind guides, pillars of cloud by night, led their stumbling followers in circles.

The Little Man of this new world was Charlie Chaplin, whose inconsequential moods and actions, and alternations of hope and dejection, mirrored the general disintegration. His fame in the nineteen-twenties was universal. No one in his own lifetime had ever been known to so many millions, who in every land saw themselves in the forlorn little man in his battered bowler and huge shapeless boots, his trim officer's

moustache an emblem of his social aspirations, his final disappearance beyond the twilight skyline the confession of his defeat. Wearying at last of the pathos of failure, Chaplin in 1925 produced "The Gold Rush," in which the Little Man triumphed both in love and in the pursuit of wealth. The film was revived in 1942, and as one watched the Little Man struggling in a world of husky toughs, one remembered how in the intervening years another down-and-out, with the same kind of moustache and a not much more impressive appearance, had overturned the whole planet, toughs and all. This parallel in mind, one followed the Little Man's search for gold in Alaska with a different kind of interest. The fantastically unsuitable get-up in which he braved the snowy wastes now seemed part of his technique. When, as he tottered along the edge of a precipice, a bear sniffed at him and turned away, one was relieved rather for the bear than for the Little Man. The gale that blew him back into Black Larsen's cabin, after Black Larsen had ejected him, seemed to come from a million lungs, and one was not surprised when Black Larsen later on ran into an Alaskan equivalent of the Night of the Long Knives. The huge bulk of the Little Man's partner seemed appropriate, and the happy ending inevitable—both of them multi-millionaires, the Little Man in fashionable clothes strutting up and down his suite on an ocean liner, and the beauty he has adored mute and blissful beside him.

What the Little Man of "The Gold Rush" desired was money and women, what Hitler desired was power, these desires forming together the sum of what most men want from the world. Hitler, who was born in the same week of April 1889 as Chaplin, was his complement not his antithesis, the Napoleon of the mass-consciousness as Chaplin was its Byron, and therefore cast for the more ungrateful part, since it has fallen to him to demonstrate, on the widest possible scale, that the obverse of self-pity is not pity for others, but hatred, and that no one has less sympathy with the poor than the down-and-out who has managed to become an up-and-in.

After a century and a half of emptying the divine out of life, the epoch which opened with the uniqueness and Utopianism of Rousseau has collapsed in the self-deification and New Order of Hitler. Many remedies for a shattered world are now being offered to mankind, but they are all collective remedies, and collective remedies do not heal the ills produced by collective action. The purpose of this book is not to suggest the true remedy, except indirectly, but to illustrate in four famous examples the barren results of action and the destructive effect of power. Naturally, it is not disputed that benefits of a secondary order may flow from the achievements of able rulers; it was clearly to the advantage of England



PLATE 9. CHARLES CHAPLIN IN *THE GOLD RUSH*  
(Copyright, United Artists)



PLATE 10. ADOLF HITLER

in the second half of the sixteenth century to be governed by Queen Elizabeth and not by Queen Anne. But, on a much deeper level of reality, it was not to the advantage either of Elizabeth or of those who served her that she should set herself up as a semi-divine figure, a Virgin Queen exalted high above common humanity. What is divine in man is elusive and impalpable, and he is easily tempted to embody it in a concrete form—a church, a country, a social system, a leader—so that he may realise it with less effort and serve it with more profit. Yet, as even Lincoln proved, the attempt to externalise the kingdom of heaven in a temporal shape must end in disaster: It cannot be created by charters and constitutions nor established by arms. Those who set out for it alone will reach it together, and those who seek it in company will perish by themselves.

## *Elizabeth*

### I

THE political genius of Elizabeth has been denied in recent years, both by romantic writers, suckled on Kingsley and Froude and vexed at her business-like attitude to the Spanish Main and Drake, and also by neo-Catholic historians, in whose opinion she was only the pawn of the squalid parvenus who had succeeded to the altruistic statesmen of earlier days, when England still belonged to the Faith. Her Catholic contemporaries took another view of her. The first of the many to pay her more or less reluctant tributes was Count Feria, Philip II's envoy in England. Philip, who had been married to her sister Mary, was considering a marriage with Elizabeth as a means to retaining a control in English affairs, and requested Feria to report on her disposition. Shortly after her accession, Feria wrote to Philip that she had told him she owed her throne neither to the King of Spain nor to her nobility, but to the people. "She is much attached to the people," Feria wrote, "and is very confident that they are all on her side, which is indeed true"; and a few months later he reported that she was incomparably more feared than her sister, and gave her orders and had her way as absolutely as her father.

Elizabeth was born in 1533, the child of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife. Catherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife, had borne him five children. Three were stillborn, one died soon after birth, and the surviving child was a girl, Mary. Henry wanted a male heir, sharing the general view that a queen would marry either an Englishman, of whom the rest of the nobility would be jealous, or a foreigner, and that in either case the dynasty would be endangered. That he suffered from syphilis, the great scourge of the sixteenth century, is almost certain, in view of the numerous premature births and dead children from his first two wives, the poor health of such children of his as survived, and his own physical degeneration in later years, when he became so unwieldy that he could hardly pass through a door, and was covered with festering sores. But he preferred to look on Catherine's failure to bear a healthy son as God's punishment on him for marrying his brother's widow, and accordingly instructed Cranmer to declare his marriage with Catherine null and void, and to legalise his union with Anne Boleyn.

The birth of a girl, Elizabeth, to Anne was a shock to Henry, and

when after an interval of rather more than two years she bore him a stillborn boy, he felt that this was another of God's punishments, and sent Anne to the block. Cranmer declared his marriage with Anne null and void, and the baby Elizabeth entered, as Mary had previously entered, into a period of illegitimacy.

Elizabeth, who was not quite three when her mother was executed, lived for some years at Hunsdon in the charge of Lady Bryan, who, as is usual with compliant persons, attributed her weakness with Elizabeth to her sympathy with suffering: "God knoweth, my Lady hath great pain with her great teeth, and they come very slowly forth, and causeth me to suffer her Grace to have her will more than I would." At table she cried till she got what she wanted, Shelton, another member of the household, excusing his surrender to her clamour on the ground that she was as yet too young to be severely disciplined. Meanwhile death, divorce and the axe were taking their toll of Henry's wives, until at last a durable wife, Catherine Parr, came upon the scene, a cheerful, good-hearted woman through whose intervention Elizabeth was invited to Court, and both Mary and Elizabeth were reinstated in the succession.

Soon after Henry's death Catherine Parr married Thomas Seymour, the Lord High Admiral. Mary, a solemn embittered woman, now in the thirties, considered this a slur on her father's memory, and asked Elizabeth to leave Catherine and set up house with her. But Elizabeth, perhaps feeling that it would have been more of a slur on her father's memory to refrain from remarriage, stayed with Catherine. Seymour, the younger brother of Somerset, who had been appointed Protector during the minority of the new king, Edward VI, wanted to replace his brother as the virtual ruler of England, and would have married Elizabeth rather than Catherine, had not the Protector and his Council headed him off. He was now living under the same roof as Elizabeth, and often went into her bedroom in the mornings: "He would bid her good morrow and ask how she did, and strike her upon the back or on the buttocks familiarly," or, if she was not yet up, "he would put up the curtains and bid her good morrow, and make as though he would come at her; and she would go further in her bed so that he could not come at her." These frolics coming to Catherine's knowledge, she offered to accompany her husband into Elizabeth's bedroom, where she would join with him in tickling Elizabeth, a gloomy amusement for all three, nor can she have been much surprised when one day she found Elizabeth alone with Seymour, and in his arms. There was no open quarrel between Catherine and her stepdaughter, but Elizabeth moved elsewhere.

A little later Catherine died in childbirth, and Seymour at once

renewed his proposal of marriage to Elizabeth, who was just fifteen. His marriage with Elizabeth was part of his general plan to overthrow the Protector and make himself master of England, to which end he conciliated the young king with secret presents of money, and got Lady Jane Grey, a possible claimant to the throne, into his own household, hoping to marry her to Edward, and thus consolidate the king's position. But the Protector struck first, Seymour was arrested at the beginning of 1549, and Somerset sent an agent, Sir Robert Tyrwhit, to Hatfield, with instructions to obtain from Elizabeth an admission that Seymour was planning to marry her. Tyrwhit, unable to draw Elizabeth, wrote to the Protector: "I do assure your Grace she hath a very good wit, and nothing is gotten of her but by great policy." Among other attempts to shake her, Tyrwhit told her a rumour had spread among the people that she was with child by Seymour and had been sent to the Tower, whereupon Elizabeth wrote to Somerset: "My Lord, there are shameful slanders, for which, besides the great desire I have to see the King's Majesty, I shall most heartily desire your lordship that I may come to the Court . . . that I may show myself there as I am." Somerset did not grant this request, but yielded to an alternative proposal from Elizabeth that he should proclaim throughout the country that the slander against her was false. Thus, she said, he would convince the people that both he and the Council "have great regard that no such rumours should be spread of any of the King's Majesty's sisters (as I am, though unworthy)."

Seymour was executed, and Elizabeth fell dangerously ill, nor did she recover such health as she possessed for some years. It was her immense vitality which carried her through to her seventieth year, but she lived on her will and her nerves, not on a normally healthy constitution.

In the spring of 1551, two years after Seymour's death, Elizabeth was allowed to come up from the country. Like Bonaparte after his return from Egypt, when he lived in a modest apartment and went about Paris in civilian clothes, or, according to Shakespeare, like Henry IV when he was still only Bolingbroke, Elizabeth seemed to everyone simple and unassuming, as in a plain frock, a heavy book in her hand, she moved sadly and abstractedly among the overdressed and painted ladies of the Court. She was "sweet sister Temperance" to the young king, but whatever good she expected from his growing affection vanished with his early death. He had never been strong, for some time before his end he was tormented by perpetual coughing, and his last prayer was: "O Lord God, free me from this calamitous life."

Immediately after his death, Northumberland, who had displaced Somerset and married his son to Lady Jane Grey, proclaimed her queen.

The conspiracy collapsed, Lady Jane was imprisoned, and Elizabeth, who had declined an invitation to assist at Lady Jane's crowning, rode into London behind the new queen, Mary.

## 2

The English Reformation was twenty years old when Mary came to the throne in 1553. However indeterminate on the spiritual side, it had already struck deep roots on the material, thousands of Englishmen, from noblemen to yeomen, having benefited from the dissolution of the monasteries and the redistribution of church lands. By this time, too, great numbers of the clergy were married, and though some of them may have felt a nostalgia for a celibate priesthood, it is unlikely that they mentioned it to their wives. But of intense feeling either against or in favour of Catholicism there was little when Mary came to the throne, and Mary herself was popular while the brief revulsion against Northumberland's conspiracy lasted.

The Reformation in England having started with the quarrel between Henry and the Pope over the divorce of Mary's mother, the papal supremacy had become to Mary the symbol of the happiness life had hitherto denied her, and she was resolved to re-establish it. During Edward's reign she refused to abandon Mass, and within a month of her accession she provoked riots in the City by restoring Mass in several of the churches there. Her proposed marriage with Philip, the son of Charles V, the Spanish emperor, increased the popular feeling against her, and patriotism and the Protestant faith began to be identified. Elizabeth understood what was happening, but Mary's anger when she refused to attend Mass alarmed her, she pleaded ignorance of the Catholic faith, and begged for books and teachers to instruct her in it. The good effects of this request were dissipated by the Spanish ambassador, Renard, who persuaded Mary that Elizabeth was insincere, and, though he could not get Mary to commit her sister to the Tower, managed to have Elizabeth banished from the Court. Setting off for Ashridge, Elizabeth halted ten miles from town, in order to send back a message to Mary, asking for chasubles, chalices and other requisites for celebrating Mass.

Early in 1554 Sir Thomas Wyatt, supported by the French king, who was frightened by the alliance between England and Spain, led a rising in favour of Elizabeth, whom he proposed to marry to Edward Courtenay, a descendant of Edward IV, and place on the throne. The rebellion failed, and Elizabeth was brought to London under a strong guard. Lady Jane Grey had just been executed, and the crowds who gathered round

Elizabeth's litter were deeply stirred when she ordered the covering of her litter to be removed, and was revealed erect, pale and haughty. Three weeks later, while rain was falling, an open barge took her from Whitehall to the Tower, which she entered through the Traitor's Gate. "Here lands," she cried, "as true a subject, being prisoner, as ever landed at these stairs. Before Thee, O God, I speak it, having no other friend but Thee alone."

All attempts to shake her in cross-examination failed, no proof of her having been in touch with Wyatt could be found, and after two months she was released, to the disgust of Charles V and Renard, and sent to Hatfield, in the charge of an elderly gentleman, Sir Henry Bedingfield, whom she tormented with all the ingenuity of a temperament which, however steady underneath, was infinitely capricious on top. On her way to Hatfield she was cheered by large crowds. Anti-Catholic feeling was growing quickly, and among other signs of it a cat was hanged on the gallows in Cheapside, in a garment like a priest's, the crown of its head shorn, and a piece of paper to represent a wafer thrust between its fore-feet—nevertheless, more fortunate in the part allotted to it in English religious history than the cats who during the anti-Catholic riots under Charles II were placed in a hollow iron effigy of the Pope, their screams when a fire was lit beneath the effigy giving much pleasure to the crowds.

In the July of this year Philip married Mary, and a few months later Cardinal Pole, the Pope's legate, arrived in England. Parliament, to whom the legate conveyed the Pope's absolution of the country's lapse into heresy, accepted it humbly, but lost no time in safeguarding all property previously belonging to the Catholic Church. England being Catholic once more, and the heresy trials and burnings beginning, Elizabeth made her confession and took the sacrament. Her position was now easier, for Philip, who had succeeded to the Spanish throne, was friendlier to her than his father had been, preferring her to Mary Stuart, who had a claim to the English succession, and was engaged to the French Dauphin.

In the late summer of 1555 Philip went back to Spain. Like Henry VIII with Anne of Cleves, he had formed too flattering an idea of Mary from the portrait shown him when the marriage was being discussed, and he left England with relief, the more so since Mary was passionately in love with him and, though disappointed in a pregnancy which proved imaginary, still hoped for a child. In her deepening bitterness Mary tried to get Elizabeth out of England by marrying her to the Duke of Savoy, and was so angry when Elizabeth resisted that Elizabeth hesitated and

nearly yielded. Meanwhile the burning of Protestants went on, the general hatred of Mary grew, and two risings in favour of Elizabeth were attempted, without success. Several members of Elizabeth's households were arrested, but there was no evidence to warrant Mary moving against her sister, and she had to read with what patience she could Elizabeth's high-minded disclaimer of any sympathy with the conspirators: "When I revolve in mind, most noble Queen, the old love of Paynims to their Prince, and the reverent fear of Romans to their Senate, I can but muse for my part, and blush for theirs, to see the rebellious hearts and devilish intents of Christians in name, but Jews in intent, towards their anointed King."

In the spring of 1557 Philip returned to England in order to obtain assistance in his war against France. The only result of his visit was that the English lost Calais, for though Mary once more believed herself pregnant, she was again disappointed. Philip left England in the summer, and in the late autumn of the following year Mary died. Ten days before her death she expressed her willingness that Elizabeth should succeed her, if she would consent to maintain the Catholic faith. Elizabeth consented. The news that she had been proclaimed queen was brought to her at Hatfield. For some moments she could not find her breath, and stood panting, then fell on her knees crying: "*A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris.*"

## 3

Elizabeth's high arched nose, prominent cheek-bones, firm mouth and watchful mistrustful eyes all denoted the ambitious and dominant nature she had inherited from her father. A gentler or weaker woman would not have attracted, still less survived, the long sequence of dangers through which she passed from fourteen to twenty-five. It was the apprenticeship her character required, and she emerged from it not only uncrushed but resolved, in her own words, "to do some act that would make her fame spread abroad in her lifetime, and, after, occasion memorial for ever."

Henry VIII's power was based on his popularity with the country, and Elizabeth, who greatly admired her father, followed the same method of stabilising her position. Leaving Hatfield a few days after her proclamation, she showed herself about the City, spending some days at the Charterhouse, the Tower and Somerset House before moving to Whitehall for Christmas. "If ever," a contemporary wrote, "any person had either the gift or the style to win the hearts of the

people, it was this Queen, and if ever she did express this same it was at that present, in coupling mildness with majesty as she did, and in stately stooping to the meanest sort."

It was her custom almost from the beginning of her reign to make a progress through the country. These progresses meant endless trouble for the officials of her Court, who tried in vain to moderate her zest for them, and whom she delighted to torment by sudden changes in her itinerary. They involved her greater noblemen in the enormous expense of fantastic entertainments, and though with the lesser gentry there was a convention that the Queen paid for her stay, the ecstasy into which the host was supposed to be thrown by her presence made it very difficult for him to adjust outlay to what an official would afterwards reluctantly reimburse; and then there were the jewels and costly dresses which the Queen would consent to accept as a memorial of her visit. But to the mass of the people these progresses, afterwards recounted in pamphlets which were circulated through the country, brought unmixed pleasure. Riding, or borne in her litter, the Queen would stop for any poor person who approached her with flowers or a tale of distress, and would make good small losses by fire or other mischance, and put right easily remediable injuries. No one has ever understood better than Elizabeth what treasures of sympathy, good-fellowship and wit the obscure are able to divine in the actions and words of the great. One day when a man called out, as her litter was passing, "Stay thy cart, good fellow, that I may speak to the Queen," Elizabeth "laughed as she had been tickled," and then, the account continues, "very graciously, as her manner is, gave him great thanks and her hand to kiss." Of her gift for repartee one example will suffice. At her entry into Bristol the Mayor, stepping forward to welcome her, paused in stage-fright after saying "I am the mouth of the town," whereupon the Queen remarked, "Speak, good mouth," an impromptu which would hardly have been transmitted down the centuries had it fallen from humbler lips.

The towns she visited usually made a present to her of a silver cup containing money. Worcester subscribed £40, and this seems to have been a good average subscription, judging from her delight when Coventry put up one hundred.

"A good gift, one hundred pounds in gold," she exclaimed. "I have but few such gifts."

"If it please your Grace," said the Mayor, "there is a great deal more in the cup."

"What?" Elizabeth asked, and on the Mayor replying, "The hearts of all your loving subjects," she rose, not perhaps without a slight effort,

to the Mayor's level, replying, "We thank you, Mr Mayor. It is a great deal more indeed."

Yet in her feeling for her country, under the endless surface excitation of vanity and greed which her temperament required, there was some real love, flashing through in moments, as when she rode away from Norwich and, waving her switch towards the city, cried, "Farewell, Norwich," with tears in her eyes.

At the time of her accession no one foresaw the hold she would establish on her people, or the fear she would inspire in her advisers, and the only question in everyone's mind was what husband she would interpose between herself and the extraordinary difficulties of her position. With, as the Spanish ambassador put it, "no friends, no council, no finances, no noblemen of conduct, no captains, no soldiers, and no reputation in the world," she found herself threatened outside her country by a coalition of France and Scotland, and within by the growing hatred between Protestants and Catholics. Among the suitors who were anxious to come to her rescue, Philip of Spain was the most important. By marrying him she would have averted trouble from the Pope and intimidated Scotland and France, but at the cost of destroying all the enthusiasm at her accession, and of ranging against her the exiles who had left England during the Marian persecutions, and were now, as a Catholic bishop lamented, hurrying back: "The wolves be coming out of Geneva and other places of Germany, and hath sent their books before, full of pestilent doctrines, blasphemy, and heresy, to infect the people." As it was impossible for Elizabeth to please everyone, she followed what was to prove her constant practice of leaving everyone dissatisfied and no one despairing. In the first public document of her reign she pacified the milder Catholics by dropping Henry VIII's title of Supreme Head of the Church, substituting "et cetera," which expressed aptly enough her lifelong attitude towards spiritual matters. At the same time Mass was abolished, and the Prayer Book became the only lawful form of public worship. To the Puritans the Prayer Book was "an unperfect book, culled and picked out of the Popish dunghill, the Mass-book." The Catholics naturally did not approve it, and were further distressed when tables replaced altars in the churches and the saints on the church walls were whitewashed. But the renewed breach with Rome was a step in the right direction for the Puritans, and the Catholics were gratified when Elizabeth put back in her private chapel the crucifix and candles which she had removed after her accession.

Meanwhile she kept on deferring her answer to Philip's suit, some-

times listening graciously to the pleadings of Feria, the Spanish ambassador, and sometimes surprising him with what, as the representative of the most powerful of monarchs, he considered a very insolent attitude, as when she told him that she was of pure English blood, with no Spanish admixture like her late sister. Feria wrote home that she was the daughter of the devil, and at last Philip decided to transfer his proposals to the daughter of the French king, but was careful to insist that his affection for Elizabeth remained firm. By this time she had so many suitors that she could spare Philip, though probably not without a pang of annoyance and surprise.

## 4

Elizabeth's attitude to sex, though enigmatic, is not beyond conjecture. She was not without affection, and she seems to have inherited some of her father's sensuality, but her dominant bent was towards power, and though the love of power often coexists with sensuality, with which it is emotionally connected, it tends to displace it, especially in women. In Elizabeth her dominant bent was intensified by the experiences of her early years. As a child her admiration for her father must have grown at the expense of some grief over her mother, and whatever the softening effect of her feeling for Seymour, it was more than neutralised by the shock of his execution. Then came the years when she was fighting for her life, with every thought and emotion centred on the political situation, and no one and nothing to trust in except her own wits and courage, a period which confirmed her in her isolation, and left her with the instinctive feeling that to give herself to a man was to hand the keys of her fortress to a potential enemy. If this was obscure to herself at her accession, it was incomprehensible to everyone else, and no one regarded as anything but maidenly affectation her answer to a Parliamentary petition that she should marry: "I have already joined myself in Marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of England. . . . And do not upbraid me with a miserable lack of Children; for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are Children and Kinsmen to me; of whom if God deprive me not (which God forbid), I cannot without injury be accounted Barren. . . . For me it will be enough that a marble stone should declare that a queen having reigned such a time lived and died a Virgin."

As Parliament was not concerned with her maternal feelings, but wanted her to provide an heir to the throne, this answer, which, logically considered, created some millions of claimants to the succession, was a

good example of the feminine irrelevance which she was so often to use in order to baffle her advisers. But at the time it would not be seen in this light, especially as her infatuation with Dudley suggested anything but an inveterate virgin.

Of all her more or less platonic affairs, the one with Dudley, Earl of Leicester, seems to have come nearest to shaking her virginal resolution. Entered upon in her first relief at being alive and no longer in danger, it lasted for more than two years in an acute form, occasioning many ribald jokes throughout the country, and much uneasiness to her advisers, especially Sir William Cecil. It was a bad sailor, Cecil once said, who did not put into port when a storm was brewing, a theory of seamanship which places Cecil among the most accomplished sailors of all time. He began his public career as secretary to Somerset, transferred his services to Northumberland when Somerset was overthrown, and when Northumberland was overthrown abated Mary's displeasure by reverting to the Catholic faith and withdrawing quietly from public life. Elizabeth saw his value, and as soon as she became queen appointed him her Principal Secretary. Like everyone else, he did not take her seriously at first, and was so upset by her open and violent flirtation with Dudley that he told the Spanish ambassador he was thinking of resigning his office, and added that he believed Dudley was planning the murder of his wife, Amy Robsart. A few days later, Amy Robsart was found dead in her home, Cumnor Place near Oxford, but though the country was horrified and Dudley was generally suspected of having taken this means to clear the way to a marriage with the Queen, Elizabeth continued to see him as often as before. This seemed to her advisers to show an infatuation which could end only in marriage, a prospect repellent to every one except the Earl of Sussex, who argued that as her whole being was suffused with desire at the sight of Dudley, an heir could certainly be looked for from their union.

By the summer of 1561 her passion was waning, and the crisis was over. That she ever slept with Dudley, in the fullest and least somnolent sense of that word, is, for reasons already given, improbable. We have also, for what it may be worth, her own denial, when Catherine Ashley, one of her ladies, begged her to silence rumour by marrying Dudley; and tortuous though she was in public affairs, she was too arrogant to lie easily where her own dignity was concerned. She was always, she answered Catherine Ashley, surrounded by her ladies of the bedchamber and maids-of-honour, who at all times could see whether there was anything dishonourable between her and her Master of the Horse—not that she knew of anyone who could forbid her, had she the will or pleasure

to such a dishonourable life, but she trusted in God that nobody would ever live to see her so commit herself.

It is also improbable that she ever came really near to marrying Dudley, for she declared that she would never consent to his being called king, and as she also said she would never be known as the wife of a peer, it is hard to see what third course she could have contemplated. Even allowing for her youthful desires, she would doubtless, had the occasion required, have said in 1560 what she said in 1585, when Leicester was making too much of himself in the Low Countries: "I will let the upstart know how easily the hand which has exalted him can bear him down to the dust."

Her affair with Dudley did not prevent her from collecting suitors. Though handsome, she was sexually unattractive, and, apart from the political advantages of being sought by most of the eligible princes in Europe, their desperate assaults on her soothed her uneasy vanity. After Philip fell out, her most important suitor was a son of the Austrian emperor, Ferdinand, the Archduke Charles, whose siege lasted for ten years. Baron Breuner, sent by Ferdinand in 1559 to explore the situation, reported that the King of Sweden was negotiating for a marriage between Elizabeth and his eldest son, Eric, and had offered to exchange all the copper coins in England for good silver and settle four hundred thousand ducats a year on Eric as soon as he became co-ruler of England. Elizabeth considered that Eric was sufficiently honoured by receiving a refusal on each of the many occasions when he renewed his proposals, but with the Archduke Charles she was more conciliatory. Politically, at any rate, her virginity had become a sore point with her, and probably with her eye on the Archduke, while not forgetting the other suitors who would welcome such an assurance, she instructed Burghley in 1564 to write in these terms to her agent in Germany about the friendship between Leicester and herself: ". . . He is so dear to the Queen by reason of his merits that she could not love a real brother more. . . . But I see and understand that she only takes pleasure in him on account of his most excellent and rare qualities, and that there is nothing more in their relations than that which is consistent with virtue, and most foreign to the baser sort of love. And this I write to you in good faith, so that you may surely understand from me what the truth is; and this I wish you to believe and to assert boldly amongst all when occasion demands it."

By 1567 the patience of the Archduke was nearing its end, and the new emperor, his brother Maximilian, was also beginning to despair of Elizabeth, who wrote to him in this year of her confidence that he would ignore any miscreant's suggestion that her letters were disingenuous and

evasive. His comment on this to Charles was that he had just received a most obscure, ambiguous and involved communication from which it was impossible to decide whether the Queen was fooling them or not, to which Charles replied that he did not believe and never had believed anything would come of it, and had had no little occasion to exercise his self-command.

Rome still had hopes of Elizabeth, and in the following year Cardinal Delphino begged the Archduke to reflect, before abandoning his suit, how momentous would be the conquest of a realm like England, rich in pure gold and all costly things, renowned for its old nobility, heroic past and fertile soil, and destined by God, as he believed, to be led back by the Archduke to the truth of the Holy Faith. But Charles had suffered enough, and, marrying a Bavarian princess, became one of the fiercest supporters of the Counter-Reformation.

## 5

Vast designs, even though they lead to St Helena, impress posterity more than the day-to-day coping with immediate problems which is the surest way of keeping a foothold in the welter of imbecility and egotism that forms by far the greater part of political history. Bacon said of Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, that he possessed rather a dexterity to deliver himself from dangers when they pressed him than a providence to prevent and remove them far off, but if Bacon had been more near-sighted and less flamboyant he would have been more fortunate in his efforts at sinking upwards. The prudence which Elizabeth inherited from her grandfather was deepened in her by feminine instinct. Great men of action usually have a polygamous appetite for conquest, but Elizabeth was rooted in her own country, which she preserved and controlled in the spirit of a strong-willed though sagacious wife. Whatever threatened her hold on England she judged from that standpoint alone, and chief among these threats, more menacing than the Pope, or Spain and France and Scotland, was the growth of Puritanism, the religion of the expanding middle classes. From the first the Queen's uneasiness about Puritanism conditioned much of her policy, especially in her treatment of Mary Stuart.

A few months before the death of Mary Tudor, the intractable Scottish Calvinist John Knox published in Geneva his *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, an attack on the women rulers who were hostile to the Reformation, Mary Tudor, Catherine de Medici and Mary of Guise, the Regent of Scotland. His argument was that

women—weak, sick and impotent creatures—were ridiculously unfit to rule men, “the hole and strong.” The day of vengeance on the cursed Jesabel of England, he said, was already appointed in the counsel of the Eternal, her empire and reign were a wall without foundation, and, he added, “I meane the same of the Authoritee of all Women.” Calvin, who hoped that when Elizabeth came to the throne she would prove his most valuable ally among the sovereigns of Europe, was much vexed by his pupil’s lack of tact, and in the following year wrote to Cecil that he had had no suspicion of the book, and was for a long time ignorant even of its existence. A presentation copy of his *Commentaries on Isaiah* accompanied this letter, but was returned to its author by Elizabeth.

Meanwhile Knox had gone back to Scotland, where he found the country ready to revolt against the Catholic Church. The people were being roused by the Puritan preachers, and the nobility, in addition to their resentment against Mary of Guise for filling the chief posts in the kingdom with Frenchmen, wanted to follow the English example and appropriate the church lands. Forming a body called the Congregation out of the preachers and the discontented nobility, Knox started a rebellion, and the Congregation approached Elizabeth with the suggestion that she should marry the Earl of Arran, a lunatic, and lend them her support. Mary Stuart, Mary of Guise’s daughter, was now married to Francis II, and Elizabeth, hearing that he was about to be proclaimed King of Scotland, England and Ireland, exclaimed, perhaps referring to Arran: “I will take a husband who will make the King of France’s head ache, and he little knows what a buffet I can give him.” But though her Council, headed by Cecil and Nicholas Bacon, were in favour of immediate intervention, Cecil even threatening to resign unless the Queen took action, Elizabeth did not stir. Money was scarce, so owing to plague and famine were men, and above all Elizabeth could not bear Knox, both for the reason expressed by an English archbishop—“God keep us from such a visitation as Knox has attempted in Scotland, the people to be orderers of things”—and because of his opinion of women rulers. Cecil had to warn his correspondents in Scotland not to mention Knox’s name, and Knox did nothing to smooth matters, replying, in answer to an appeal to modify his verdict on women rulers: “I cannot deny the writing of a book against the usurped authority and unjust regiment of women; neither yet am I minded to retreat or call back any principal point or proposition of the same till truth and verity do further appear.” Deborah, he added, was a special dispensation, and Elizabeth might prove the same, but she must repent having bowed in idolatry.

Some months passed in inaction, but at the close of 1559 Elizabeth

allowed Lord Winter to sail with a fleet to the Forth. The Regent protesting, Elizabeth said there must be some explanation of Lord Winter's conduct, and she could not condemn him unheard. A little later, encouraged by the neutral attitude of Philip of Spain, who was prevented from helping the French against Scotland by his desire to keep them out of England, Elizabeth felt that she could take the risk of open intervention. A force which she sent against Leith was repulsed, but the growing difficulties of the Guise party in France, a serious reverse for Philip in Tripoli, and the death of Mary of Guise combined in favour of the Congregation, and by the Treaty of Edinburgh in July 1560 the French troops were withdrawn from Scotland, Leith was dismantled, the Mass and monasteries abolished, and Elizabeth's title to the English throne acknowledged by France.

The death of Francis II in 1561, and the eclipse of the Guise party, made Mary Stuart anxious to return to Scotland, of which, her mother the Regent being dead, she was now the legal ruler. It was twelve years since she had left it, at the age of six, the Congregation were willing to give her a trial, and Elizabeth was friendly, hoping that the new queen would keep Knox in order.

As headstrong as Elizabeth, but with none of her sagacity, Mary made no effort to conciliate Knox, but at once restored Mass at Court, and thought she had worsted Knox because the aristocratic section of the Congregation, after a show of recalcitrance, conformed for the time being to the old style of worship. Knox, supported by the nation as a whole, attacked her from the pulpit, and browbeat her face to face. Mary had great sexual attraction, and Knox's marriage in middle life to a young girl suggests a taste for permitted pleasures, so his ferocity with Mary probably took a sharper edge from his sensibility to her charm. He had also the Puritan rancour against high position, mixed with the curious Puritan servility, which in Cromwell, who was always calling himself a "poor worm," probably expressed only a desire to placate a watching Deity, but in Knox expressed also a certain uneasiness in the presence of his worldly superiors. Mary, who lived entirely in her sensations and had the stupidity of that kind of woman, could not understand why she should be at the mercy of this bellowing plebeian, and during one of his rantings cried out: "What are ye within this Commonwealth?" To which Knox replied: "A subject born within the same, Madam, and albeit neither earl, lord nor baron within it, yet has God made me, how abject that ever I be in your eyes, a profitable member within the same."

With any tact at all, Mary could have had Elizabeth's friendship, and

so stabilised her position in Scotland and strengthened her succession to the English throne. Much younger and more attractive than Elizabeth, who was always enquiring about Mary's appearance and trying to believe it inferior to her own, Mary ought to have been especially discreet in the question of her remarriage, hard though it certainly would have been to find an eligible husband not already on Elizabeth's waiting-list. But she could not resist the pleasure of encouraging a drift of suitors away from Elizabeth, among them the Archduke Charles, Eric of Sweden, and a mentally deficient son of Philip, Don Carlos, whose marriage with Mary would have united Spain and Scotland.

Negotiations for an interview between the two queens were begun, but were interrupted by a campaign on behalf of the Huguenots, the failure of which helped to confirm Elizabeth's distaste for military adventures. On its return from France the army brought back small-pox, which the Queen caught, and nearly died. The country was alarmed, and when she was better the Commons petitioned her to appoint a successor. After she had sent them away with her assurance that though they might have many stepdames they would never have a more natural mother than herself, a deputation from the Lords waited on her, and were told that she expected more sense from them than from the Commons, where there were "restless heads in whose brains the needless hammers beat with vain judgment." They need not be troubled, she said. As a woman she preferred spinsterhood, but as a prince she was trying to reconcile herself to marriage, which she had no occasion to contemplate yet, for the marks they saw in her face were not wrinkles but the pits of small-pox.

Perhaps partly as a result of the ravages of her illness, Elizabeth let her desire to humiliate the younger queen overrule her good sense, and offered Dudley to Mary as a husband, a childish piece of arrogance to which Mary replied by marrying Darnley. Darnley, a Scottish nobleman of Catholic sympathies, was an English subject, his father having lived in England as an exile. By marrying Darnley without Elizabeth's consent, Mary offended the Queen, and at the same time alienated her two chief advisers, Murray and Maitland, and the rest of the Scottish nobility. The Congregation came to life again, and there was a Protestant revolt, which Mary crushed. Murray, escaping to England, appealed to Elizabeth for support, and was snubbed, Elizabeth having no wish to see Scotland in a Catholic alliance with France and Spain. Mary was now in a favourable position to come to terms with Elizabeth, who for a short time was on the point of yielding to her request that she should be named as Elizabeth's successor.

## 6

Apart from the reluctance felt by all autocrats, whether in politics or business, to single out the person who will eventually enjoy their power, Elizabeth did not wish by naming a successor to create a focus round which conspiracies could form, as they had formed round her in her predecessor's reign. Largely for the same reason she was reluctant to marry, foreseeing the jealousy the nobility would feel for her husband, the growth of factions, and the possibility of a civil war. It was in reference to this danger that she wrote in 1567 to Maximilian, in the course of their correspondence about the Archduke Charles, that the present state of Scotland was a warning to her to hesitate before committing herself irrevocably to his brother.

Mary's infatuation for Darnley had lasted only a few months. He was succeeded in her desires by an Italian musician, Rizzio, who was murdered in her presence by Darnley and a group of Protestant nobles. Having detached Darnley from his associates, Mary had him assassinated by a new lover, the Earl of Bothwell, and married Bothwell a few days after his wife divorced him. The Congregation, reviving yet once more, raised an army. Mary and Bothwell were defeated, Bothwell fled to Norway, and Mary was imprisoned in a castle on Loch Leven, after signing an abdication in favour of her infant son, James, and acknowledging Murray as Regent. Nearly a year later, in the May of 1568, she escaped from Loch Leven and raised some forces, but was beaten again and fled to England, hoping to be helped by Elizabeth, who had sent her messages of sympathy during her imprisonment, to the chagrin of Cecil.

It was neither to Elizabeth's advantage to help Mary against Murray, who might have called in French aid to safeguard the rights of the infant James, nor to allow Mary to proceed to France and stir up trouble there. What she hoped for was that Mary would be restored with the approval of Murray and the Congregation. In the meantime she placed her in detention in the north of England, and instituted an enquiry at York into the death of Darnley. Feeling after a while that York was too near the Border, she transferred the enquiry to Westminster, where it was eventually found that there was no evidence to connect Mary with Darnley's death, and no reason to look upon Murray as disloyal to Mary.

Catholicism was still strong in the north of England, nor was there any affection there for Elizabeth, whose progresses never took her beyond the Trent. Using the considerable freedom allowed her, Mary began to

collect sympathisers among the gentlemen of the north, and to intrigue with Cecil's enemies in Elizabeth's Council, the conservative peers. The old nobility was largely Catholic in sentiment, though not in profession, favoured Mary's succession, and wanted a marriage between her and the Duke of Norfolk, the head of their order, a project which, however uncanonical, Bothwell being still alive, was not necessarily treasonable. But Norfolk did not care to admit it to the Queen, and denied it as often as she tried to inveigle him into a confession.

Elizabeth knew that Mary was also in communication with Spain, which for various reasons was becoming increasingly hostile to England. The Counter-Reformation was growing, England was showing no signs of returning to the Faith, and her sailors were injuring Spain both in the home seas and the Spanish Main, English privateers having recently seized a cargo of bullion sent by Genoa to Alva, the Spanish Governor of the Netherlands, and Drake and Hawkins beginning their raids on the Spanish settlements in the West Indies. The conservative peers wanted Elizabeth to return the bullion to Spain, but Elizabeth, claiming that the Spanish ambassador was urging Alva to institute a blockade of England, kept the bullion, which she treated, to the satisfaction of the Genoese bankers, as a loan from Genoa to herself.

Norfolk still refusing to disclose his marriage plans, the Queen put him in the Tower, and sent for the Earls of Westmorland and Northumberland, who declined the summons. A revolt broke out in the north, but the leaders were incompetent and soon took refuge across the Border, leaving their peasant followers to the vengeance of Elizabeth, who had six hundred of them hanged, her patience with "the meanest sort," north or south of the Trent, being much less elastic than her patience with her noblemen, and she no more than any other sovereign in history valuing her obscure subjects as individuals, but only as the component parts of a collective loyalty.

Soon after the suppression of this revolt, the Pope issued a Bull excommunicating Elizabeth, to the vexation of the chief secular Catholics, Philip, Alva and the Emperor. Alva in particular, who was finding it difficult enough to keep the Low Countries in order without provoking Elizabeth into seizing more bullion or otherwise making a nuisance of herself, deprecated the rising Catholic sentiment against her, and refused to assist in a conspiracy organised in 1571 by Ridolfi, an Italian banker in London. Ridolfi's plan was that Norfolk, if possible with help from Alva, should raise a revolt in England, marry Mary, and place her on the throne. The plot was discovered, Norfolk was tried by his peers and sentenced to execution, and the House of Commons demanded that Mary

also should be put to death, Peter Wentworth, a Puritan member who had already greatly irritated Elizabeth over the succession question and the privileges of the House, denouncing Mary as the most notorious whore in the world.

Elizabeth having signed and cancelled warrants over some months for the execution of Norfolk, a joint deputation from the Houses waited on her, with a demand for the death both of Norfolk and Mary. Her glowing and irrelevant answer moved the Commons so much that two members proposed that the thanks of the Commons for the Queen's good opinion of them should be conveyed to her, but Peter Wentworth denied that she deserved any thanks, and the proposal was dropped. At last the Queen yielded over Norfolk, but as she would not yield over Mary, Parliament passed an Act taking away Mary's claim to the throne, and making her responsible with her life for any insurrection in her favour, without the need of an enquiry whether she were implicated in it. Elizabeth vetoed this Act, using the customary formula, *La royne s'advisera*, which, she pointed out, was not really a veto, but only a suspension of her consent.

## 7

The Politiques, a party whose Catholicism was as tepid as Elizabeth's Protestantism, coming into power in France, Elizabeth suggested to Catherine de Medici that a marriage between herself and one of Catherine's sons might be arranged. The Duke of Anjou, Catherine's second son, was too Catholic to be suitable, so Alençon was selected for Elizabeth's consideration. Alençon was twenty years younger than Elizabeth, and excessively ugly. The pock-holes on his face, the English ambassador in Paris reported to Elizabeth, were no great disfigurement, being rather thick than deep or great. But those at the end of his nose were of a depth and size which only divine assistance could render tolerable to others—"how much to be disliked may be as it pleaseth God to move the heart of the beholder." There was nothing in this report to weaken Elizabeth's decision never to consent to a marriage until she had seen her future husband with her own eyes. Shelving Alençon for the time being, she continued the negotiations with his mother, between whom and herself a treaty was signed at Blois in 1572. The alliance with Elizabeth proved of no advantage to Catherine. The Politiques had involved her in a war with Spain, and when she tried to strike at Spain by assisting the rebels in the Low Countries, she found that Elizabeth was supporting the rebels with an expedition the main object of which was to prevent the French from occupying Flushing. In the late summer of 1572 the tentatively

Protestant front presented to the world by France and England at Blois collapsed in Catherine's slaughter of the Huguenot nobility assembled in Paris on the eve of St Bartholomew, and in a general killing of Huguenots throughout the country.

Protestant feeling in England was greatly intensified by the Massacre of St Bartholomew, and as at the same time the enterprise of England—the reconversion of the English by Catholic missionaries trained in the Netherlands—was furthered with increasing ardour, the Queen's last hopes of including all her subjects in a seemingly unobtrusive Church began to vanish. Against this disappointment she could place the affection of her people, who now loved her too much to relish jokes about her virginity, and, less pleasing, the fact that not only England but all Europe was beginning to regard her as the focus of Protestant resistance to Rome. A male autocrat in her position would have formed a Protestant confederation and anticipated the Thirty Years War by half a century, but the Queen, who was unromantic except about her own charms, hated waste, whether of men or money, and managed England like an extremely thrifty and capable housekeeper. She controlled all expenditure personally, and as her income, on which she had to run her court, her government and her armed forces, was only a quarter of a million pounds a year, she avoided every avoidable occasion for outlay, especially where the interests of the Protestant religion were concerned, with an obstinacy which distracted her male advisers, Cecil once exclaiming, "If we prosper, it must be, as our custom is, by miracle," and Leicester writing to Walsingham of the situation in the Netherlands, "Our only Queen, whom God I see must now defend and uphold by miracle."

In an extraordinary crisis she could appeal to Parliament, but as Parliament resented raising taxes and Elizabeth disliked taking any step which might increase its power, she preferred to supplement her income by investing in the expeditions of Drake and other freebooters on the Spanish Main. "The gentleman careth not if I disavow him," she said approvingly of Drake, whom she made full use of both as a pirate and an admiral, but whose almost supernatural renown among the Spaniards does not seem to have touched her imagination, and whose fame in later ages would have surprised her only less than Shakespeare's.

Catherine having re-established friendship with Spain by the Massacre of St Bartholomew, Elizabeth, in 1573, concluded a treaty by which trade between England and Spain, suspended since the episode of the bullion, was revived. The improved relations between Spain and England re-invigorated the relations between Catherine and Elizabeth, and Alençon



PLATE 11 PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH  
Known as the Pelican Portrait, c. 1575-1583  
The original is the property of E. Peter Jones, Esq



PLATE 12. DEATH MASK OF QUEEN ELIZABETH  
*After the reproduction in the Illustrated London News*

was replaced on the list of the Queen's suitors. For some years this precarious cordiality maintained itself as best it could, Catharine during this period rebuilding the power of the Guises to the equal uneasiness of Elizabeth and Philip, Elizabeth supplying secret help to the Huguenots in France, and open help to William of Orange, the leader of the revolt in the Low Countries, and Philip keeping in touch with Mary Stuart and planning a descent on Ireland.

Towards the close of the 'seventies Elizabeth revived the courtship of Alençon, who was on bad terms both with his brother Henry III and with the Guises. Although it suited Elizabeth to keep France and Spain anxious over Alençon, the fire which the young man put into his courtship seems to have been really pleasing to her forty-five years. He despatched a friend, Jean de Simier, to represent him till he was able to woo in his own person, and Simier stole one of the Queen's nightcaps for Alençon, exchanged letters with her, the Queen signing herself "*à jamais le singe votre,*" and when Alençon arrived in London sent a note to the Queen, telling her that he had just put his exhausted master between two sheets, and wished to God it was by her side. Alençon, taking over from Simier, carried on in the same strain for a fortnight, and, according to Simier, spent his last night in tears and groans, waking Simier at an early hour to rave over the Queen's loveliness and to assert the impossibility of living without her. None of the Queen's Council, except the Earl of Sussex, still hopeful of an heir, liked this courtship much, and the City was violently hostile, the Puritan preachers denouncing it, and John Stubbs, a brother-in-law of a leading divine, issuing a pamphlet in which he said that Alençon was rotten with disease. It is most unlikely that the Queen ever intended to make Alençon her Prince Consort, but being resolved not to give the appearance of yielding to popular clamour, she ordered the right hands of Stubbs and the publisher to be struck off, and insisted against her legal and other advisers on the sentence being carried out. In this barbarity there was probably a good deal of personal feeling as well as policy, for she was very sorry to lose Alençon, whether because her last chance of a child seemed to go with him, or because she felt that his shortcomings were only to the eye, and that his ugliness was much more than balanced by his youth and bounding life.

A year or two later Alençon visited England again, to raise money and troops for an expedition to the Netherlands, and though he did not get quite so big a loan as he wanted, the Queen sent him off in great state, with Leicester, Hunsdon, Howard and others among her chief nobles in his train. After he had gone, she said she would give a million pounds to have her French frog swimming in the Thames instead of the marshes of the

Low Countries, and when, in the summer of 1584, he died before Antwerp, which he was trying to capture from his Dutch allies, the Queen wept for three weeks, suspending all business, to the great vexation of Walsingham.

## 8

In 1580 Drake returned from his voyage round the world with a vast booty taken from the Spaniards. Visiting the *Golden Hind* with the French ambassador, the Queen asked the ambassador to knight Drake, a compliment to France which the ambassador might have been glad to evade. Drake was allowed to keep ten thousand pounds of his plunder, and Elizabeth put the rest on one side against the remote possibility that she might wish, for some unforeseen reason, to restore it to Spain. Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, having complained to the Queen about Drake, Elizabeth retorted by demanding that Philip should write her a letter of apology for a recent Italian-Spanish landing in Ireland. She was still Philip's affectionate sister-in-law, but the open rupture she had postponed for more than twenty years was in sight.

Philip was in constant touch with Mary Stuart, who was now middle-aged, no longer hunted, and when not corresponding with the outer world whiled away the time over embroideries and a collection of lap-dogs and little birds. Among her correspondents were most of Elizabeth's Council, including the severely Puritan Walsingham, who had organised an extremely efficient secret service, by means of which he was able to supply Elizabeth with selected copies of the letters written to and by Mary. The Queen still hoped to arrange for the return of Mary to Scotland, but the Scots would not have her, either as Queen or as Regent during the minority of James. Even Throgmorton's plot, in 1583, the aim of which was to raise a Catholic revolt in England with Spanish help, and replace Elizabeth with Mary, did not finally alienate the Queen. Parliament demanded the execution of Mary, and reprisals against the Catholics, but the Queen contented herself with sending Mendoza back to Spain and refusing to have anyone in his place, and limited the persecution of Catholics by distinguishing between those who had always been Catholic and those who had rejoined that faith.

The anti-Mary and anti-Catholic fury broke out again in the following summer after the assassination of William of Orange, and Elizabeth went so far as to place Mary in the charge of Sir Amyas Paulet, a grim Puritan, and to send a big expedition to the Low Countries under Leicester. Yet she still hoped to come to some arrangement which should restore Mary to Scotland, a hope not shared by James, who kept clear of his

mother and, after the Babington plot in 1586, dissociated himself from her in these terms: "How fond and inconstant I were if I should prefer my mother to the title, let all men judge." Babington, who was in communication with Mary, had planned to kill Elizabeth, and the outcry when the details of his conspiracy were made public must have convinced the Queen that Mary's death could not be much longer postponed.

To one of the deputations which begged her to remove in Mary the chief danger to her own life, she made an answer which in its reference to a violent death seems to reveal less her concern for herself than her feeling for Mary: "For your sake it is that I desire to live. I take no such pleasure in it that I should much wish it, nor conceive such horror in death that I should greatly fear it; and yet I say not, but if the stroke were coming, perchance flesh and blood would be moved with it, and seek to shun it." As the pressure on her increased, her anger rose, and she exclaimed to a deputation from the two Houses how grievous it was that she, who had in her time pardoned so many rebels and winked at so many treasons, should be forced to such a proceeding against such a person. Parliament adhering to its demand for Mary's death, the Queen replied: "If I should say unto you that I mean not to grant your petition, by my faith I should say unto you more than perhaps I mean. And if I should say unto you I mean to grant your petition, I should then tell you more than is fit for you to know. And thus I must deliver you an answer answerless."

At last she signed the death-warrant, but after Mary's execution denied that it had been sent off with her knowledge, and wrote to James of "that miserable accident, far contrary to my meaning." The formal execution of a sovereign shocked Europe, and the general view was expressed by a Spanish nobleman who said: "It had been better done to have poisoned her or to have choked her with a pillow, but not to have put her to so open a death."

Two months after Mary's execution, in April 1587, Drake sailed to Cadiz, where he destroyed the fleet Philip was preparing against England. Early the next year Drake wished to repeat this achievement, but the Queen, who was having peace talks with Parma, the Spanish Viceroy in the Low Countries, would not let him sail. Meanwhile England was busy preparing for an invasion, having, as usual in a crisis, great reserves of unexpended energy to draw upon. A Spanish attack from the Netherlands was expected, and the army concentrated at Tilbury. "It was a pleasant sight," a spectator wrote, "to see the soldiers as they marched towards Tilbury, their cheerful countenances, courageous words and gestures, dancing and leaping wheresoever they came." Riding down

to Tilbury to review her troops, Elizabeth said to them: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field."

## 9

The defeat of the Armada saved England for the time being from invasion, and Elizabeth, worried by all the recent expenses, demobilised in great haste. Owing to its dramatic nature, the victory over the Armada has come to be looked upon as ending the war with Spain. But, so far as any date can be fixed upon as beginning a war which was never formally declared by either side, 1588 marks the opening of hostilities which were to continue during the rest of the Queen's life.

In the first thirty years of her reign Elizabeth had raised England to the position summarised by Pope Sixtus V: "She certainly is a great Queen, and were she only a Catholic she would be our dearly beloved. She is only a woman, only mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Emperor, by all." Two consequences, both vexatious to Elizabeth, flowed naturally from the success with which she was steering England through so many dangers—a desire for war and glory among the younger aristocrats, and a great intensification of Puritan nationalism, which meant the identifying of patriotism with Protestantism, and of Protestantism with a Church simplified by middle-class zealots. The first of these consequences was especially troublesome during the last decade of the Queen's reign, the second during the 'eighties.

Calvin's Geneva was the model which the Puritans wished to imitate in their proposed reconstruction of the English Church. There was not to be, as in the Roman Church and the Church of England, a hierarchy, but, as in the early days of Christianity, a group of churches, each organised locally under a presbyter or elder. To supervise these assemblies there would be provincial synods, and to supervise the provincial synods there would be a national synod. In other words, there would be a hierarchy, which would differ from the existing one in being controlled by aspiring Puritans instead of by the Queen and her bishops. This was quite clear to Elizabeth and to Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, however obscure it may have been to the Puritans, to whom the foggy

sincerity which envelops every mass movement in its earlier stages must not be denied.

In the early 'eighties the Puritans began to organise local conferences of ministers, with occasional general conferences which foreshadowed the national synod at which they were aiming. One of the tasks of the local conferences was to collect information about the state of the country parishes, and the character of the vicars, a few of whom, according to the reports laid before the conferences, feared the Lord unfeignedly, but most of whom were dicers and pot-companions, with a sprinkling of Popishly-inclined whoremasters.

A purified Church required a purified doctrine, and every Puritan preacher had his own contribution to this need. "I have heard," said the Queen, "there be six preachers in one diocese, the which do preach six sundry ways. I wish such men to be brought to conformity." An attempt to establish conformity was made by Whitgift, who drew up three articles to which he demanded that every minister should subscribe. The attempt failed, and the Presbyterian movement became more threatening, Peter Wentworth attacking the Queen's veto on religious discussion in the House of Commons, and another Puritan M.P. making a passionate speech in which he declared that in comparison with God's cause "the rest are all but terrene; yea, trifles in comparison. Call you them never so great, or pretend you that they import so much; subsidies, crowns, kingdonis, I know not what they are in comparison of this."

Early in 1587 a Puritan member introduced a Bill to destroy the whole ecclesiastical organisation and erect a Presbyterian order, and the ensuing conflict between Elizabeth and the Parliament ended with the committal to the Tower of Peter Wentworth and four of his supporters. Deprived of their Parliamentary spokesman, the Presbyterians turned to pamphleteering, and had a great popular success with the Martin Marprelate tracts, seven anonymous pamphlets which came out at intervals throughout 1588 and 1589. But the country was not yet ready for a revolution, the authority of the Queen, never fundamentally questioned even by Peter Wentworth, was too great, and when Whitgift replied to the Martin Marprelate tracts by arresting the leading Presbyterians in twenty counties, the movement subsided, and remained quiescent during the rest of the reign.

## 10

Marlowe's "mighty line" and Shakespeare's historical plays reflected the expanding nationalism and war fever of the country in the years after

the defeat of the Armada. In France, Henry of Navarre, the chief Continental champion of Protestantism until he became a Catholic, was fighting the Catholic League, which was supported by Spain. The war party in England was strongly in favour of helping Henry, and though, as usual, no one declared war on anyone else, a great many Englishmen crossed the Channel between 1589 and 1593. From the practical standpoint it suited the knights of the shires to take a regiment of their tenants to France. New tenants, replacing casualties abroad, had to pay a fine before entering into possession, and a gentleman could reckon, before setting out to help Henry, on being in pocket at the end of the campaign, even if Henry himself paid nothing for his services. But such considerations weighed less than the prevailing thirst for adventure and glory, which was especially strong among the younger men at Court:

Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,  
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens.

Among these adventurers the most conspicuous was Leicester's stepson, the Earl of Essex, who after serving under Leicester in the Low Countries went to Court. Elizabeth took a great fancy to the young man, who, though not handsome, had the charm of a warm reckless nature, and showed him so much favour that he resented any attentions she paid to others, challenging his principal rival, Sir Walter Raleigh, to a duel. In the struggle for the chief place under the throne Raleigh, handsome, well-born, a great fighter both on land and sea, a student and a poet, combined more personal advantages than any of his rivals, but whether because to have all the advantages blunts the force of any one of them, or because Elizabeth mistrusted so much brilliance, she never admitted Raleigh to any responsible position, and even on the personal side seems to have discarded him for Essex without any qualms.

The antithesis of Raleigh in character, though destined for the same end, Essex was a born inopportunist, who could rise only by qualities which ensured his downfall, for his charm would have lost its potency had it been controlled by the prudence necessary to make the most of it. He had hardly won the Queen's favour when he left the Court without her consent to join an expedition against the Spanish forces in Portugal. In spite of some incidental successes, the expedition was a failure, and only seven thousand men out of fifteen returned, the rest dying of diseases contracted while celebrating the capture of the lower town of Corunna. A little later Essex was off again, to take Rouen for Henry of Navarre, but after knighting twenty-four of his followers under the walls of the town, and challenging the governor to a duel, he went back to England, Rouen uncaptured.

Meanwhile, Burghley was coaching his son Robert Cecil, a hunchback, to succeed him as the Queen's chief adviser. Francis Bacon, who had attached himself to Essex, having failed to ingratiate himself with Burghley, did his best to train Essex for a match against the Cecils, but found turning a silk purse into a sow's ear no easier than the proverbially difficult reverse process. All that he effected was to damage his own prospects with the Queen. Elizabeth's fondness for Essex, a mixture of maternal feeling and starved desire, did not extend to his adherents, whom she disapproved both as a ruler and a woman, mistrusting them as potential agents of Essex's vague but wild ambitions, and disliking them as the friends of the man she loved. "You fare ill because you have chosen me for your mean and dependence," Essex said to Bacon, and advised him to detach himself from so harmful a patron.

In 1593 Henry of Navarre became a Catholic, and two years later, with a united France behind him, declared open war on Spain. "My God," Elizabeth wrote to him on his change of faith, "is it possible that any worldly consideration could render you regardless of the divine displeasure?" As it was not only possible, but had happened, she reconciled herself to the blow. A series of bad harvests, and riots over the cost of food, was increasing the country's weariness of the Spanish war, but Essex was encouraged by Henry's declaration, and persuaded the Queen to sanction an attack on Spain. In the early summer of 1596 a great fleet, under the joint command of Essex and Howard, set out, and the campaign opened with the capture of Cadiz after a daring attack in which Essex distinguished himself. But Essex and Howard soon fell out, Cadiz was lost, and the Spaniards conveyed a treasure fleet to safety, and burnt twelve million ducats' worth of merchandise, the seizure of which had been one of the chief objects of the expedition.

While Essex was away, Elizabeth made Robert Cecil her secretary, and when Essex returned, to find himself a popular hero for his gallantry in the attack on Cadiz, Bacon warned him that it was dangerous to be a favourite with the people and at the same time without a high official position, like Cecil's. Such reasoning was beyond Essex, and in the following year he set out on another adventure, the destruction of an Armada which the Spanish were preparing to revenge the expedition against Cadiz. Having failed to destroy the Armada, and failed to intercept a treasure fleet sailing from the West Indies, he came back. Fortunately the Spaniards were as inefficient as Essex, and their Armada never reached England, most of it being sunk on the way by the autumn gales.

A few months later the French king opened peace negotiations with

Spain. He had agreed with Elizabeth and the Netherlands not to conclude a separate peace, and Elizabeth wrote to him: "If there be any sin in the world against the Holy Ghost it is ingratitude. If you get any reasonable terms at the Spaniard's hands, you may thank the English succours for it. Forsake not an old friend, for a new one will not be like him." All this was wasted on Henry, who went on with his negotiations, probably expecting Elizabeth to follow his example. There was the same expectation in England, where for the first time since the outbreak of hostilities in 1588 peace seemed imminent.

Uncertainties now crown themselves assur'd  
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.  
Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
My love looks fresh . . .

Shakespeare wrote, prematurely, for after a great deal of argument Essex got his way, and the war went on.

In thus yielding to Essex, in spite of her ingrained dislike of war, Elizabeth revealed a growing weakness and uncertainty. Her own power was still, and remained, her deepest concern, but she was becoming less able to hide from herself what she had sacrificed to it. For many years her jealousy of others marrying had been an obsession. It was natural that Leicester, Raleigh or Essex should smart for what the Queen looked upon as an infidelity to herself, but even inconspicuous courtiers had to suffer a period of disgrace when they married, and towards her maids-of-honour she sometimes displayed an almost insane ferocity. Learning once that one of them was in love, she sent for the girl and told her she had obtained the consent of the girl's father to the marriage, and when the girl expressed her gratitude, Elizabeth replied: "I have his consent given to me, and I vow thou shalt never get it into thy possession." Her appetite for flattery was correspondingly voracious, and at the age of sixty, with a red wig and few and yellow teeth, she could relish Raleigh picturing her with "the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometimes sitting in the shade like a goddess; sometimes singing like an angel; sometimes playing like Orpheus."

Occasionally, like a decimal point reducing a long row of figures to nothingness, her sense of reality made a sudden and disconcerting appearance, as when she said to an Italian visitor: "My brother, the King of France, writes to me that I am to show you the most beautiful things in this kingdom, and the first thing you see is myself, the ugliest." The visitor could not reply that she presumably knew her facts, the Queen could be certain of a passionate protestation, but the remark must have sprung from many hours of uneasy private reflection. She knew that the

stereotyped flattery of her earlier favourites was a tribute to her personality and power, not to her charm, and was drawn to Essex partly because his insolence made her feel a woman, however much she resented it as a queen. One incident shows how they felt and behaved towards each other. In a fit of temper because she refused a request he had made for one of his friends he turned his back on her, and she boxed his ears. He put his hand to his sword, and the Lord High Admiral coming between them, left the Court, vowing he would not have put up with such an affront even from Henry VIII. "He would do well," said the Queen, "to content himself with displeasing her on all occasions and despising her person so insolently, but he should beware of touching her sceptre."

## II

Burghley died in the August of 1598, Philip in the following month. Not long before his death, Elizabeth told Burghley that though he had brought up his son as near as might be like himself, yet he was to her in all things, and would be, Alpha and Omega, nor did she wish to live longer than she had him with her. The world looked bare to her without her oldest friend and oldest enemy, and she lacked the will to resist the desire of Essex to take an army into Ireland, an enterprise in which his enemies were anxious to see him involved, and the probable failure of which Elizabeth herself was doubtless prepared to regard as a not unqualified misfortune. Now that Spain and Henry were at peace, Ireland was become the chief theatre of the struggle against Spain, which was sending troops and supplies to the Earl of Tyrone, an Ulster chieftain who aimed at making himself master of the whole country.

Towards the end of March 1599, Essex set off with sixteen thousand men and thirteen hundred horse, accompanied by the Earl of Southampton, the patron of Shakespeare, whose carefully worded prediction of Essex's anticipated success reveals both his sympathy with Essex and his realisation that a comparison between Essex and Henry V would need a good deal of toning down to make it acceptable to the Queen :

Were now the general of our gracious empress,—  
As in good time he may,—from Ireland coming,  
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,  
How many would the peaceful city quit  
To welcome him ! much more, and much more cause,  
Did they this Harry.

After drifting about in Leinster, and then in Munster, leaving, as Elizabeth put it, no more track behind him than a ship at sea, Essex went

into Ulster, where he had a talk with Tyrone. His enemies in England preoccupied Essex much more than the reduction of an Irish rebel, and whether or not he discussed, as was believed, some kind of an alliance with Tyrone, he hurried straight from his interview to London, and rushed in on the Queen. Elizabeth received him affectionately, and when he left her he thanked God that "though he had suffered much trouble and storms abroad, he found a sweet calm at home." In another interview, an hour later, she was still friendly, but after dinner, being satisfied that she was in no immediate danger from whatever designs he was maturing, she turned on him, asked him how he dared to come back without her leave, and dismissed him from her presence.

It was their last meeting; her anger grew as she reflected on the mixture of insolence and ineptitude in everything he had ever done, and when her godson, Sir John Harington, visited her, her rage burst out, and she seized his girdle, emblem of the knighthood Essex had conferred on him in Ireland. "By God's Son," she cried, "I am no Queen; that man is above me. Who gave him command to come home so soon? I did send him on other business. Go home!"

Essex was confined to his house for some months, and the Irish command given to Mountjoy, who was a friend of Essex and whom Essex persuaded to get into touch with James. The project laid before James was that he should bring an army into England, where Mountjoy would join him with a contingent from Ireland, and between them they would re-establish Essex in the Queen's favour, and compel her to declare James heir to the throne. James's reply, friendly but non-committal, was intercepted by Elizabeth, who let Mountjoy know that she had learnt of his plans. A little later, in the June of 1600, Essex was brought before a special commission, censured and suspended from his various offices. A further attempt to get armed help from Mountjoy having failed—Mountjoy urging patience—Essex tried to soften the Queen with humble and adoring letters. Though liberated from his confinement, he was not allowed at Court, so he wrote to her saying that his uttermost ambition was to be a mute person in that presence where joy and wonder barred speech. Apart from anything else, he wanted to see her to plead for the renewal of his monopoly of the customs on sweet wines, from which he drew a large part of his income; but Elizabeth would neither readmit him to her presence nor renew the monopoly. "An unruly horse," she said, "must be abated of his provender that he may be the easier managed."

The friends of Essex encouraged his rage at this treatment. As a woman Elizabeth had exercised a power over the men who served her deeper than a male autocrat's, and even poetry, instead of withering under

an autocrat, had blossomed under a queen. But the spell was weakening now, she had reigned too long and grown too old. To Essex and his friends it seemed that the time had come to replace age with youth, the Queen and the Court party with themselves. Sir John Harington, visiting Essex about this time, was frightened by his unbalanced state: "He uttered strange words bordering on such strange designs, that made me hasten forth and leave his presence. . . . His speeches of the Queen becometh no man who hath mens sana in corpore sano. He hath ill advisers, and much evil springeth from this source. . . ." In one of his outbursts Essex cried that the Queen was an old woman, as crooked in mind as in carcase. These words, it is said, were reported to Elizabeth, and helped to harden her when the revolt broke out.

On February 3, 1601, five of Essex's friends met at Southampton's house to discuss plans drawn up by Essex for seizing Whitehall and the Tower and taking possession of the City, where Essex expected support from the Puritans, *having recently made friends with some of the divines there*. The friendly reference to puritans in *Twelfth Night*, which was played during this period, has puzzled readers of Shakespeare: "The devil a puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser." Probably Shakespeare inserted it as the best he could do in the way of a compliment to these new friends of Essex and Southampton, for it is difficult to explain it on any except a time-pleasing ground. The conspirators valued the theatre as a means of influencing the public, and on the day before the revolt bribed the company at the *Globe* to play *Richard II*, with its deposition scene.

On the 8th of February Essex rode into the City with two hundred followers. A herald, whom Cecil had ready for a stroke of this kind, followed behind Essex, proclaiming him a traitor. Essex was crying "For the Queen, for the Queen, a plot is laid for my life," but the people at the windows looked on indifferently, his followers began to slip away, and in his agony the sweat dripped from his distorted face. Turning to escape from the City, he met with some resistance at Ludgate, but at last reached his house, and in the evening surrendered to the Queen's troops.

To the French ambassador in an audience on the following day the Queen said: "A senseless ingrate hath at last revealed what hath long been in his mind." The rising had not frightened her, and she had been dissuaded only with much persuasion from going into the City on a false rumour that a revolt had broken out there. But after denouncing Essex to the French ambassador, she gave way, laughing and showing signs of hysteria.

Essex was tried, Bacon leading for the prosecution, and sentenced to

death. In the Tower, awaiting execution, he collapsed, making a full confession in which he denounced all his friends, not sparing even his sister. It was the first time that he had been brought face to face with the inexorable nature of life, but after this collapse he recovered himself, and died bravely, asking for a private death so that he might not be tempted by the applause of the crowd to make a vainglorious end.

## 12

Henry of Navarre on the news of Essex's death exclaimed: "She only is a King! She only knows how to rule!"; and the same thought was probably in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote: "O Julius Caesar! thou art mighty yet!" But Elizabeth felt no exultation, the year passed wretchedly for her, and when Sir John Harington, whom she had loved since he was "Boy Jack" at Westminster School, called on her in the autumn, he found her "quite disfavoured and unattired. . . . She disregardeth every costly cover that cometh to her table. . . . Every new message from the City doth disturb her, and she frowns on all the ladies. . . . She walks much in her Privy Chamber, and stamps with her feet at ill news, and thrusts with her sword at times into the arras in great rage. . . . The dangers are over, and yet she always kept a sword by her table."

Although she had executed only six of the rebels, sparing even Southampton, the feeling of the people was against her, and they mourned for Essex as for a lost champion:

All you that cry O hone! O hone!  
Come now and sing O Lord! with me.  
For why? Our jewel is from us gone,  
The valiant knight of chivalry.

Brooding on the change in her people, she said one day that she had proved by her own surpassing example how little faith there was in Israel. She could no longer take her customary rest in the afternoon, and at night her sleep was broken, or disturbed by terrible dreams, in one of which she seemed to be looking at her own body, "exceedingly lean and fearful in a light of fire." In the evenings she often sat in the dark, sometimes in tears. Her ladies believed she wept for Essex, but no doubt her thoughts passed back far beyond him, to the shouting crowds who had lifted up her heart as she emerged from the dangers of her youth, who had lined her way for so many years, and now were gone.

She could still answer a call on her powers, and never hid the politician yielding to necessity behind the mother caring for her children more superbly than in her last encounter with the Commons, when she ranged

herself with the new order against the old, with the middle classes she disliked against the noblemen she had cherished. Throughout her reign she had distributed monopolies, like the wine one withdrawn from Essex, among her courtiers. From luxuries they had been extended to necessities. Salt, steel and starch had been taxed for the benefit of her noblemen; and the Commons and the nation generally, burdened by the endless Spanish-Irish war, were beginning to focus their discontent on these monopolies. Cecil having pacified the House with a promise that the most oppressive should be revoked, the Queen received a deputation of a hundred and twenty members, who knelt before her during her opening remarks. Asking them to rise, as she had still much to say, she told them she had never put her pen to any grant until she had been assured that the deserved benefit it would bring to one of her servants would not involve harm to her subjects in general. "That my Grants should be grievous to my People, and Oppressions to be Privileged under colour of our Patents, our Kingly Dignity shall not suffer it. Yea, when I heard it, I could give no rest unto my thoughts, until I had reformed it, and those varlets, lewd persons, abusers of my bounty, shall know I will not suffer it."

Her last words to the deputation were: "And though you have had and may have many Princes more mighty and wise sitting in this seat, yet you never had or shall have any that will be more careful and loving"; then, turning to Cecil, she asked that the gentlemen should all, before they departed, be brought before her to kiss her hand.

Her gloom deepened. In the spring of 1602 she told the French ambassador that she was tired of life, her spirit found no contentment, and there was nothing that gave her pleasure. Though everyone knew that James would succeed her, and though nearly everyone, including Cecil, was already in correspondence with their future king, Elizabeth would not name him. Visiting the Court in December, Harington wrote home: "I find some less mindful of what they are soon to lose, than of what they may perchance hereafter get. . . . To turn askant from her condition with tearless eyes, would stain and foul the spring and fount of gratitude." Remembering her "watchings over my youth, her liking to my free speech and admiration of my little learning and poesy," Harington tried to distract and divert her, but she said she was past her relish for such matters: "When thou dost feel creeping time at thy gate, these fooleries will please thee less."

A few weeks before her death, she received the Venetian envoy in full state, her crown on her head, her light-coloured wig covered with pearls, rubies and diamonds; but when the envoy congratulated her on her excellent health she did not reply. As she felt her end drawing near, she

refused all remedies, ate hardly anything, and for four days remained sitting on a pile of cushions, resisting all persuasions to be moved into her bed. On the 19th of March 1603, hopeless of inducing her to name her successor, Cecil sent James the draft of the proclamation of him as king, but four days later, on the eve of her death, her Council having assembled in her bedroom in obedience to some signs, she assented with a gesture when James's name was mentioned. Though she could no longer speak, she was still conscious, and those about her understood that she wanted the Archbishop. Approaching her as she lay on her back, one hand on the bed, the other hanging beside it, the Archbishop told her that, though she had been long a great queen here on earth, yet shortly she was to render an account of her stewardship to the King of Kings. Having prayed and blessed her, the old man was about to rise, but she made a sign that he was to continue praying. He prayed for another half-hour, and then would have risen, but she again made a sign, so he continued to pray by her side, with earnest cries to God for her soul's health, and these seeming to compose her, she at last allowed him to go.

## *Cromwell*

### I

JOHNSON said of Cromwell that he wanted nothing to raise him to heroic excellence but virtue, and Voltaire called him "a fearless man, at times fanatical, at times crafty—a usurper who knew how to rule." The credit of revising this view of Cromwell, and establishing him as a warrior saint, has always gone to Carlyle, but a good deal of it is really due to Macaulay, whose essay on Milton in 1825 enveloped the Puritan Revolution in the softening haze which the Romantic movement was throwing over the past. By this date the Whig oligarchy, the prudent heirs of the Puritans, were ready to have their rude forebears, hitherto regarded with distaste, polished into picturesqueness, and Macaulay polished them with such a will as to be at once taken into the highest Whig circles. In that environment his enthusiasm for the Puritans and their leader cooled. In spite of a streak of romanticism, he belonged to the Augustan age of our literature and history; even in the essay on Milton he treats Cromwell rather as an unfinished Whig than as complete in himself, and his later years were devoted to making a hero of William III, who stood in the same relation to Cromwell as Augustus Caesar to Julius, or as a fire-extinguisher to a volcano.

Nevertheless, the germ of all Carlyle's rhapsodies over the Commonwealth—"a thing far-shining miraculous to its own Century, and to all Centuries"—is in the essay on Milton, which Carlyle is known to have been much impressed by; and it was from Macaulay, whom everyone read, rather than from Carlyle, that the nineteenth century took its view of Puritanism. "The Puritans," wrote Macaulay, "were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. . . . Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. . . . On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt: for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand."

This passage is true enough to the attitude of the Puritans to explain their triumph under Cromwell. To find a reason for admiring itself and despising everyone else is the first essential of a party which sets out to conduct a successful revolution.

Every revolution has its roots in the infinite, and grows downwards into time and corruption. The longing for a simpler belief, the condemnation of wealth and rank, the revolt against oppression and tyranny, are all in their origin ideal, springing from the sense innate in every man of the unity of all life, and the existence somewhere of a state of perfection. The great movement of the Reformation, partly religious, partly social, arose out of a desire to excavate the individual from beneath the institutional rubble heaped through many centuries upon him. It had its martyrs, and it produced one book with a universal appeal, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in which is expressed in a simple poetic form the resolve of the individual spirit to reject everything else in the pursuit of a happiness beyond this life—"To go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it."

The forces set in motion by any expansion of the human spirit inevitably attract men of great will but warped and stunted natures, parasites who finding no nourishment in themselves organise others into communities out of which the founder extracts the barren nutriment of gratified vanity. Calvin, a sick pedant, driven by an implacable hatred of life, fastened on to the Reformation, and carved out of it a tyrannous institutionalism and a creed which separated a few elect souls from all other living beings, whom it condemned to eternal torment. This creed was brought to England by the Protestants who had fled from Queen Mary, and for various reasons found there a more fertile soil than might have been expected from the character of the English people.

The Old Testament, the inspiration of Calvin's theology and of the Puritan movement, is the book of a people ceaselessly oppressed by larger nations and upholding their pride by giving themselves a unique importance in the eyes of God. The prevalent emotion in it is a craving for power and revenge, and it is this craving, not its sublime transmutation by Christ, which has permeated Christianity, filling its history with wars and persecutions. Terrorism is alien to the English nature as expressed in our greatest writers, from Chaucer through Shakespeare to Wordsworth, and it needed a peculiar combination of circumstances to make a large section of the English feel sufficiently like the Jews of the Old Testament to take their sacred writings as a model for their own conduct.

England in the reign of Elizabeth was a small country, menaced on all sides, by Spain, by the Papacy, by France, by Scotland and by Ireland as a Spanish base. Here was the first point where the Elizabethan Puritan felt a kinship with the Jews. The second was in his resentment against a prodigal and insolent aristocracy, which he would find expressed throughout the Prophetic Books. The members of a new order necessarily feel

a social inferiority to the order they are displacing, and the Puritans under Elizabeth, though many of them had established good properties on the lands of the old Church and others were flourishing in the City, encouraged themselves against the Court with such passages as the one in which Amos attacked the upper classes of Jerusalem "that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches . . . that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments. . . . Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed."

The more prosperous Elizabethan Puritan did not, however, disdain the name of gentleman, and Oliver Cromwell once said of himself: "I was by birth a gentleman, living neither in any considerable height nor yet in obscurity." This claim has recently been endorsed by Hilaire Belloc, who in his many and increasingly capricious attempts to disparage Cromwell as a man of action has at last been driven to declare that Cromwell (previously charged with "treasons, betrayals, acts of abominable cruelty") was too much of a gentleman to be effective as a despot. It is true that Cromwell was far enough removed from the founder of the family fortunes to be a gentleman, as were some of his cousins, who fought for the king. Nevertheless, the English instinct, which has always regarded him as a Nonconformist, is sound. The essence of a gentleman is that he is centred in his class not in himself, and when an English gentleman becomes a Mahometan, or sings Songs before Sunrise, he is looked upon as an eccentric. Cromwell was not an eccentric, his centre was not in a class but in himself. The impression he gives throughout his life is of a man going towards something, whereas if he had been a gentleman he would have seemed to be going away from something.

He was born at Huntingdon on April 25, 1599, of parents both of whom belonged to families which had enriched themselves when the monasteries were dissolved. His father's grandfather, Richard Cromwell, was Thomas Cromwell's nephew, and one of his chief agents in the spoliation of the monasteries, but did not lose Henry VIII's favour when his uncle lost his head. Henry knighted him, he married the daughter of a Lord Mayor of London, and at his death left his children large estates in five counties. The fortunes of the Cromwells continued to expand from this good beginning. Richard's eldest son, Henry, built a vast palace at Hinchinbrook, near Huntingdon, and entertained Elizabeth, by whom he was knighted; and Henry's eldest son, Oliver, lived still more sumptuously, giving James I on his way to London an enter-

tainment which is said to have surpassed any previously 'offered by a subject to a king. Sir Oliver survived well into the Protectorate of his nephew and namesake, but his style of living had corrupted whatever Puritan principles he may have had, and, though John Hampden's uncle as well as the Protector's, he remained Royalist till his death.

Robert Cromwell, the father of the future Protector, and a younger brother of Oliver, lived on a small estate at Huntingdon, which he represented in Parliament during one year, and served in various local offices. His wife, Elizabeth, had an income from property of about £250 in modern currency, her grandfather having become a large landowner round Ely at the time of the Reformation. He had a brother who, as one of Cromwell's biographers puts it, "had the singular fortune to be for twenty years the last Catholic Prior, and then, for twenty years more, the first Protestant Dean of Ely"; and it was with the Dean's assistance that Elizabeth's grandfather became a large landowner.

Cromwell's parents were therefore comfortably enough off. They had an estate sufficient for their wants, though as they had a large family they were compelled to be frugal.

Cromwell's father and mother are always described according to the common formula for Puritan parents—the father steadfast, worthy and devout, the mother homely, modest and loving. Avalanches do not collect on moss-grown banks, and there is much beside devoutness and sobriety in the portraits of Robert and Elizabeth Cromwell by a contemporary painter. Robert has a long narrow face, compressed lips, and a mistrustful embittered expression. The expansive predatory energy of the Cromwells, which in his elder brother Oliver was diffusing itself in luxury, had suffered a temporary check in Robert, who, having neither the ability to make a career for himself nor the wealth which Oliver was enjoying near by at Hinchinbrook, consoled himself as well as he could with the sour draught of Puritan theology. His wife, who bore him ten children and outlived him by about forty years, shows the remains of a much warmer nature than her husband's, but her eyes stare out with a dreary dissatisfaction deeper than his because altogether unconscious. High among the forces behind the Puritan Revolution may be reckoned the unformulated longings which women who had to live with Puritan husbands passed on to their sons.

## 2

At school as well as at home Oliver's early impressions were steeped in the Puritan outlook, his master in the school at Huntingdon being a divine who wrote two treatises proving that the Pope was Antichrist, and

compiled a volume, *The Theatre of God's Judgments*, which contained examples from sacred and profane history of punishments inflicted by God on sinners, especially highly placed ones. At Cambridge also Oliver was in a Puritan atmosphere, his father sending him to Sidney Sussex College, a nursery of Puritanism according to Laud.

Little is known of his youth, unfriendly contemporaries picturing him as a boisterous rough, fond of cudgels and football, and probably of drink and women; friendly claiming that he acquired Latin perfectly, excelled in mathematics, and "yielded to no gentleman in the rest of the arts and sciences," whatever that may imply.

That he had none of the lighter graces of culture is obvious in his portraits and in his prose, and that he lacked any disinterested delight in whatever raises the mind above a man's preoccupation with himself is plain from the whole course of his life. His nature being set towards action and power, he was drawn only to studies which furthered that end, as appears from letters which he wrote when his eldest son, Richard, was married. Richard being his heir, Oliver could not help hoping, against all the evidence, that he might be shaped into a man of affairs, to which end he asked Richard's father-in-law to guide his studies in the right direction: "I would have him mind and understand business, read a little history, study the Mathematics and Cosmography—these are good with subordination to the things of God. . . . These fit for Public services, for which a man is born." To Richard himself he wrote: "Seek the Lord and His face continually—let this be the business of your life and strength, and let all things be subservient and in order to this! You cannot find nor behold the face of God but in Christ; therefore labour to know God in Christ. . . . Recreate yourself with Sir Walter Raleigh's History: it's a body of History, and will add much more to your understanding than fragments of Story. Intend to understand the Estate I have settled; it's your concernment to know it all, and how it stands."

The impression given by this advice, which is perfunctory except about religion and property, is that Cromwell did not study any subject until he had to. His imagination, that of a man with a genius for action as distinguished from an aptitude for affairs, was kindled only by circumstances which were already taking shape. True knowledge, he said in this letter to Richard, was not literal or speculative, but inward, transforming the mind to it. In other words, the mind was not an originating faculty, but the instrument by which the intuitive faculty achieved its ends. This is also the way in which a poet uses his mind. It is in the ends which attract his intuitive faculty that the poet differs from a man like Cromwell, whose imagination was the servant, not the master, of his egotism.

There could have been little at Cambridge to fix Cromwell's mind, and it is very probable that his enormous energy found its chief outlet in football and cudgel-playing. Football, according to an Elizabethan writer, was rather a bloody murdering practice than a fellowly sport or pastime. To dash another player under the heart with the elbows, to butt him under the short ribs with the fists, to catch him on the hips with the knees, was all in the game, and from what we know of Cromwell at Drogheda and Dunbar he would not have wished it otherwise. What vents for his energies he found in London, where he is believed to have studied law for a year or so, is not known. Twenty years later he wrote to a friend: "You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness; I was a chief, the chief of sinners." His great red face, his voice thundering above the battle, his immense chest and thighs, his exuberance like that of "another man when he hath drunken a cup of wine too much," do not suggest an anchorite; and his buxom wife, by whom he had nine children, has a look of retrospective complacency which would not have been planted there by Calvin or Carlyle. There was a mass of unshaped human feeling in Cromwell, the only famous Puritan with a nickname. Jackie Knox sounds wrong, but there is nothing incongruous in "Old Noll," which expresses Cromwell in his expansive moments, flinging cushions at his friends and snowballs at his servants, and so mispronouncing the second word in *Magna Charta* as to enforce his contempt for that keystone of English constitutional liberty.

Loose in London at the age of nineteen, he may sometimes have thrown off the burden of his creed, if only in visits to the theatre. There is a very clear echo of Falstaff in his talk with Hampden at the beginning of the Civil War, when he said it was useless to oppose the men who fought for the king ("gentlemen's sons, younger sons and persons of quality") with "old decayed serving-men, and tapsters, and such kind of fellows." Being himself a son of a younger brother, Cromwell included younger sons among the king's assets, but apart from this modification he reproduced Falstaff's description of his regiment ("discarded unjust serving-men, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen") too closely for a chance coincidence of phrasing. Supporters of a recent theory that the Puritans were, in their quiet way, men of considerable culture have therefore suggested that Cromwell, like Charles I, carried a volume of Shakespeare about with him. But in Cromwell's youth Falstaff was the most popular character on the stage, and it needed no more culture to be acquainted with him than it needs nowadays to admire a film star.

The violent remorse Cromwell expressed for his breaches of the

Puritan code at this time is as good a track as any other to follow into the quagmire of his religion, a region which must be traversed by anyone who wishes to understand his life and actions. There have been, broadly speaking, three attitudes to the religion of Cromwell. According to the first view, which began in his lifetime and lasted nearly two hundred years, Cromwell was a hypocrite who used the fanaticism of his times for his own ends. According to the second view, outlined by Macaulay and developed by Carlyle, Cromwell was a soul filled with God and bent on the single aim of shaping the world in conformity with God's will. "A practical world based on Belief in God" is Carlyle's summary of Cromwell's dream. The third view is harder to define, being an attempt to reconcile the first two in a synthesis of faith and scepticism agreeable to this age of relativity. What it amounts to, when reduced to coherence, is that Cromwell's God existed for him. An enviably direct and forceful nature was privileged to be supported by an equally uncomplicated deity, and it was perhaps a pity that the modern mind could not see God in the same terms.

Of these three views, the first, that Cromwell was a hypocrite, may be too sweeping about Cromwell, but is alone entitled to be called a religious view; for one cannot give the name of religion either to Carlyle's nostalgia for an extinct devil-worship, or to the modern view that the eternal order varies from century to century, and may be rightly seen as a ferociously partisan butcher in 1650 and equally rightly as a non-committal Round Table conference of electrons in the nineteen-thirties. The men to whom Cromwell seemed a hypocrite were of widely differing characters, ranging from Johnson to Napoleon. But whether themselves disinterested or not, these men judged Cromwell by those innate and universal standards of right and wrong which men always instinctively apply to any matter in which they themselves are not involved. Cromwell's ceaseless endeavour to pass himself off as an instrument of the divine purpose has appealed to those who, like Carlyle, have an interest in harmonising worldly success and other-worldly pretensions. But the common sense of posterity, which reflects reality, however crudely, has not been conciliated by Cromwell's attempt to make the best of both worlds. Men admire despots and they admire saints, but they do not understand why they should be required to find evidence of saintliness in the career of a man who never took a risk or made a sacrifice except in the interests of his own advance from obscurity to supreme power.

In effect, whatever his conscious intentions, Cromwell was a hypocrite, that is, a man between whose precepts and whose practice there is a wider gap than can reasonably be allowed to the weakness of human

nature. Speaking on one occasion of the Irish, he said: "These poor people have been accustomed to as much injustice, tyranny, and oppression from their landlords, the great men, and those who should have done them right, as any people in that which we call Christendom. Sir, if justice were freely and impartially administered here, the foregoing darkness and corruption would look so much the more glorious and beautiful, and draw more hearts after it." These enlightened sentiments were uttered a few weeks after he had exterminated the whole population of Drogheda, and shortly before he set on foot his merciless settlement of the Irish question. In his lucid intervals, between one explosion and the next one, Cromwell was a warm-hearted man, fond of children and animals, and hating cruelty and oppression. "He was naturally compassionate towards objects in distress," the steward of his household wrote after his death, "even to an effeminate measure." In his busts and portraits, indefinitely modifying their brutal overpowering force, there is a puzzled, almost mortified look, as of a man dimly conscious that he has not found the right way to endear himself to others. But his human affections and his occasional stirrings of real insight floated loose in a great void, at the mercy of his devouring will, which alone could focus his energies and faculties. What he regarded as his religion was merely his response to the emotionalism of a movement which had found in Calvinism the sanction and embodiment of its desires and ambitions. His religion was the religion of a revolution, necessarily exclusive, and therefore necessarily false. That the Puritans were a chosen party, as the Jews were a chosen race, was their first attraction for Cromwell. But that he would not remain satisfied with a subordinate place in this chosen body comes out in his condemnation of his youthful sins; his claim that he had been the chief of sinners being only a way of preparing people for a later appearance as the chief of saints.

His religion was a drug with a double effect, stimulating him and stupefying others. As he rose above his associates, his God became more and more a projection of himself, a magnified Oliver Cromwell, who approved of everything done by his earthly instrument. To this God, who retained the Biblical character of a jealous God hating everything that could distract attention from itself, Cromwell transferred all his own egotism, and thus was always able to present himself to the world as a poor worm without any ambitions but to serve God. Not that he was conscious of the impulse behind his self-abasement. He believed in his God, and was sincerely and unceasingly anxious to placate it by assigning to it all the credit of his own triumphs: "This is none other but the hand of God," he said after Naseby, and the same tune went up after all his

other victories; "and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him."

When he was sure of himself, and did not need to bewilder others, he discarded religious language, instinctively, not cynically. His famous "Put your trust in God, but be sure to see that your powder is dry" expresses his independence of his religion in an environment where he could trust to his own genius. To understand the function of his religion in his career, one need only compare his curt clear utterances as a general in the field with the interminable scriptural rhapsodies in which he tried to conceal, from himself as well as from his listeners, the reality of his military despotism.

A good example of his first style is his reply to the officer in command at Wexford, who had asked for a little time to consider the demand that he should capitulate at once :

"Sir,

I am contented to expect your resolution by twelve of the clock to-morrow morning. Because our tents are not so good a covering as your houses, and for other reasons, I cannot agree to a cessation.

I rest,—your servant,

OLIVER CROMWELL."

Of his second style the most illuminating example is his speech to the Little Parliament, in July 1653. A few weeks earlier he had turned out the Rump of the Long Parliament; he and his officers had then appointed a hundred and forty persons to constitute a new Parliament, and it was to this body, which was dissolved within a few months, that Cromwell explained his intention of divesting the sword of all power in civil matters.

Having promised them to be brief "by reason of the scantness of the room and the heat of the weather," Cromwell began by referring to "the Series of Providences wherein the Lord hath appeared, dispensing wonderful things to these Nations from the beginning of our Troubles to this very day." The king, he said, had been removed and brought to justice, and many great ones with him. The House of Peers had been laid aside. The House of Commons itself had been winnowed, sifted and brought to a handful.

Up to this point he was fairly concise, but no summary can convey the prolixity with which he straggled towards the expulsion of the Rump, though a few phrases picked out here and there will give his general tone: "The thinking of an act of violence was to us worse than any battle that ever we were in, or that could be, to the hazard of our lives: so willing were we, even very tender and desirous if possible that these men might

quit their places with honour."—"Finding that good was never intended to the People of God,—I mean, when I say the People of God, I mean the *large* comprehension of them, under the several Forms of Godliness in this Nation;—finding, I say, that all tenderness was forgotten to the Good People . . ."—"This expedient we offered out of the deep sense we had of the Cause of Christ. . . ."

Having dealt with the expulsion itself in one short sentence, Cromwell passed to the second half of his speech, the purpose of which, he said, was to explain the method of transferring the Civil Administration from the army to the new Parliament.

The fog in which he had enveloped the events leading up to the expulsion of the Rump was a dawn mist compared to that in which he involved the future powers of his nominees: "And truly it's better to pray for you than to counsel you in that matter, That you may exercise the judgement of mercy and truth. It's better, I say, to pray for you than to counsel you; to ask wisdom from Heaven for you; which I am confident many thousands of Saints do this day, and have done, and will do, through the permission of God and His assistance. I say it's better to pray than advise. . . . I beseech you,—but I think I need not,—have a care of the Whole Flock! Love the Sheep, love the lambs; love all, tender all, cherish and countenance all, in all things that are good. . . . And indeed the triumph of that Psalm is exceeding high and great; and God is accomplishing it. And the close of it,—that closeth with my heart, and I do not doubt with yours, 'The Lord shakes the hills and mountains, and they reel.' And God hath a Hill too: 'an high Hill as the Hill of Bashan; and the chariots of God are twenty-thousand, even thousands of Angels, and God will dwell upon this Hill forever!'"

He was sorry, he said, to have kept them so long in such heat. To prevent any interruption in the work of administration, he had set up a Council of State, to whom the managing of affairs was committed. That was the position—a Council of State who would continue to administer affairs "till you see cause to alter this Council," on which constitutional note he concluded his speech.

## 3

Cromwell married at twenty-one, and settled down on the family estate at Huntingdon with his wife and widowed mother. In 1628 the third Parliament of Charles I's reign met, and Cromwell was chosen to represent Huntingdon.

In the twenty-five years since Elizabeth's death the struggle between Parliament and the monarchy had become increasingly bitter. James I's

theory of monarchy was expressed in his saying : "I will govern according to the common weal, but not according to the common will." In his view a king should hold the balance equally between all classes, safeguarding the interests of the peasant and artisan no less than those of the merchants and aristocracy. As a theory nothing could be better. To promote the welfare of a nation as a whole is the highest of political ideals. But the welfare of a nation as a whole has a different meaning according to the standpoint from which the nation is surveyed. In practice both kings and Parliaments have always been self-interested, adding to the comfort and happiness of the anonymous millions only under pressure, in order to secure their own interests and power.

James I was anti-clerical when he arrived in England from Scotland, where his belief in the Divine Right of kings had been obstinately contested by the Presbyterians in their General Assembly. The reasons which recommended Calvinism to a large section of Elizabethan England operated still more strongly among the Scots, who have always felt oppressed by their larger neighbour, and in whom the special pretensions of the Old Testament Jews struck a deeper and more enduring chord than south of the Border. In England James found the established Church favourable to his theory of monarchy. During the middle years of Elizabeth the Church of England, submitting to the fierce feeling against the Pope and Spain, was willing enough to adopt the theology of Calvin, but gradually, as an essentially aristocratic institution, it began to feel the need of a theology which would keep the expanding Puritan middle classes in check. In the meantime it supported James's mystical view of kingship : "That which concerns the mystery of the King's power is not lawful to be disputed."

In spite of his pedantry and conceit, James had the shrewdness of an abnormally timid nature. In his dagger-proof clothing, "his breeches in great pleats and full stuffed," he waddled through to a peaceful end, but he left his son a monarchy which had been converted into an ecclesiastical institution, supported by the Bishops, the Privy Council and the Prerogative Courts, and opposed by the House of Commons, the Common Law and the Puritan congregations.

Charles had inherited his father's pedantry without his caninness. He was very small, about five feet, and had the abnormal reserve and suspiciousness produced by unusual shortness of stature when it does not produce the opposite extreme of aggressiveness. Not being at ease in strange environments and among new faces, he was tenacious of old associations and friends. His early years were passed in Scotland, he never cared for England, and never tried to conciliate the Englishmen who

represented the interests which eventually destroyed him. "This King," a Venetian in London wrote, "is so constituted by nature that he never obliges anyone, either by word or deed."

He came to the throne in the spring of 1625 amid the outbursts of enthusiasm and hope which attend the beginnings of reigns. Two months later he married Henrietta Maria, daughter of Henry of Navarre and sister of Louis XIII, the king of France. From the first Charles was dominated by his wife, a beautiful woman whose notion of politics did not extend beyond the necessity of controlling the intrigues of factious nobles, and occasionally suppressing the dim impertinences of Parliaments. Henrietta was a Catholic, and among the articles of the marriage treaty were stipulations that Charles should tolerate the Catholics of England and permit priests in the Queen's household. His other chief adviser was Buckingham, who had been his father's favourite and was now trying to emulate in England the absolutism of Richelieu in France.

The friendliness with which Parliament was ready to regard the new king was quickly dissipated by Buckingham, who attacked France and Spain in succession, and was supported in both these projects by Charles. Having refused to vote money unless it were given control over the entire administration of affairs, civil and religious, the first Parliament of the reign was dissolved by the king, who had to call it back the following year, when it again refused to vote money, attacked Buckingham, and was again dissolved. Carrying on by themselves, Charles and Buckingham got into difficulties which after two years compelled them to summon Parliament once more. Disgust with Buckingham was now general. His expeditions against Cadiz and the Isle de Rhé had failed, there were mutinies among his underfed and unpaid forces, the pressing of troops excited the anger of those dependent on the men pressed, the billeting of troops aroused the resentment of those who had to board and lodge them, and everyone with any money was alarmed and incensed by forced loans and other illegal exactions. Even in the House of Lords there was a growing hostility to Buckingham, who had founded his power on a closed ring of friends and relations. So when early in 1628 Charles summoned his third Parliament, a powerful group of peers was ready to support the Commons.

Parliament began by drawing up a Petition of Right, in which it set forth and endorsed a number of old enactments against forced loans, arbitrary imprisonment, compulsory billeting, and the other abuses in which the king had been indulging. The king having expressed his intention to prorogue Parliament without ratifying the Petition of Right, the House met in great agitation. A Sir Robert Philips burst into tears

while speaking, Pym sobbed, and Sir Edward Coke, the tough old enemy of Bacon and Raleigh, could not speak for weeping and had to sit down. A little later, having recovered his self-command, he rose and said that, not knowing if he should ever again address the House, he would speak his mind freely, "and so do here protest, that the author and cause of all these miseries is the Duke of Buckingham." The House cheered wildly, and on a rising tide of courage drew up a Remonstrance in which Buckingham was named as the source of all their discontents. The king was frightened and ratified the Petition, but in anger at the bell-ringing and bonfires with which London celebrated his surrender prorogued Parliament for some months.

They met again in January 1629, and as Buckingham had been assassinated in the interval, they were free to deal with Tunnage and Poundage (custom-house duties) and religion. In spite of the Petition of Right, Charles was still levying customs dues, and under the influence of his chief ecclesiastical adviser, Laud, he was favouring the new theology of Arminius; so another Remonstrance was decided upon. As a preliminary step, the House resolved itself into a Grand Committee of Religion, and it was to this Committee that Cromwell made his first speech in Parliament.

## 4

About thirty years earlier, Arminius, a Dutchman, had framed a theology which substituted free will for necessity, and beings capable with divine help of achieving salvation for the predestined automatons of Calvin. This humane and reasonable theology did not interest Laud in its spiritual bearing, but as an ecclesiastical politician he saw its value as a buttress for the Church of England against the Puritans. The Puritans, bent on seizing power, needed a theology which divided the nation into the saved and the damned. The established Church, threatened by schisms, needed a tolerant and comprehensive theology ready at all times to welcome strayed sheep back to the fold.

The Parliament of 1629 regarded Arminianism as a cloak for Catholicism, and it was with the menace of reviving Catholicism that Cromwell dealt in his speech, of which only a fragment has been preserved. The Committee, under the chairmanship of Pym, was discussing the offences of various Arminian bishops, and Cromwell, who had received the information from Dr Beard, his former schoolmaster, rose to say that a Dr Alabaster was preaching flat Popery at Paul's Cross, by the command of Dr Neile, Bishop of Winchester. The Committee thanked Cromwell, and gave him a summons ordering Dr Beard to attend as a witness. Dr Neile and

Laud, at that time Bishop of London, were named in the Remonstrance the Parliament was drawing up, but when the House tried to pass the Remonstrance the Speaker, who was in touch with the king, adjourned it. Meeting after the adjournment, it was again adjourned, but on assembling yet once more, some of the members seized the Speaker as he was about to adjourn the House, and held him down while the House passed three resolutions, protesting against Arminianism, Papistry and illegal Tunnage and Poundage.

Parliament was dissolved by Royal Proclamation, not to meet again for eleven years, and various members were imprisoned for their part in the assault on the Speaker. Cromwell, who possessed in the highest degree the instinct of striking at the moment most beneficial to the striker, was not amongst them, and returned to Huntingdon.

Two years later, in 1631, he moved to St Ives, five miles away, where he rented grazing-lands, and passed some years of growing gloom and wretchedness. On the Continent the Thirty Years War, one of the most protracted and ruinous in history, was in its middle phase, a feast of action at which Cromwell could only stare from a distance. Farming was no cure for his unease, and the emotional appeasement of marriage was dwindling, most of his nine children having been begotten before he left Huntingdon. At the church in St Ives he used to appear with a piece of red flannel round an inflamed neck, and often in the middle of the night he sent for his doctor, in a sudden fear of death or of the fancies which crowded his disordered mind.

The methods by which Charles raised money during these years would not by themselves have precipitated a revolution. Charles was economical; the country was enjoying a period of prosperity after the escapades of Buckingham; and the financial agents of the king, though they annoyed Hampden and other wealthy landowners with shipmoney, forest fines and old feudal dues, and raised the price of necessities by monopolies, were too finicking and legalistic to excite much emotion in the country. It was Laud, and in a less degree Strafford, who brought matters to a head.

Laud's ideal was an ecclesiastical state, an England controlled by a national Church and a sacrosanct monarchy. The ceremonial unity he wished to enforce did not spring from a nostalgia for Catholicism, but from his belief that ceremonies inspired awe and submission in the people, besides being more fitting to religion than the informal manners of the Puritans. "It is called superstitious nowadays," he said, "for any man to come with more reverence into a church, than a tinker and his dog into an ale-house." He wanted a dignified and uniform Church, and set him-

self with the help of the prerogative courts to extirpate the multitudinous outcroppings of Puritan emotionalism. In 1624 a number of wealthy merchants started a system of "Lecturers," Puritan preachers, who spread over the country and were to be heard wherever the indolence of local clergymen gave openings for zeal. On becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, Laud used the Star Chamber to suppress these Lecturers and inflict heavy fines on their supporters. That he did not suppress them completely appears from a letter Cromwell wrote from St Ives in 1635 to a Mr Storie, of the Royal Exchange, who with some City friends had been endowing a Lecturer in Cromwell's country, but now, whether under pressure from Laud's agents or for some other reason, was proposing to discontinue the Lecturer's salary. Cromwell's appeal to Mr Storie, the result of which is not known, is interesting because it takes for granted that a man cannot be expected to serve God unless he is paid for it: "And surely, Mr Storie, it were a piteous thing to see a Lecture fall . . . in these times, wherein we see they are suppressed, with too much haste and violence, by the enemies of God His Truth. Far be it that so much guilt should stick to your hands, who live in a City so renowned for the clear shining light of the Gospel. You know, Mr Storie, to withdraw the pay is to let fall the Lecture: for who goeth to warfare at his own cost? I beseech you therefore in the bowels of Jesus Christ, put it forward, and let the good man have his pay."

There was nothing of the martyr in Cromwell, and his fanaticism was a horse with a powerful rider. On the fringe of the Puritan movement there were zealots, afterwards very troublesome to Cromwell, who, while Cromwell was concerning himself with the salaries of Lecturers, were harassing Laud more directly. Three of them, William Prynne, Dr John Bastwick and the Rev. Henry Burton, were pilloried by Laud in the summer of 1637 for having attacked what they considered his Popish ceremonialism. Prynne had already lost his ears for criticising a theatrical performance in which the queen had taken part. They had been sewn on, and were now cut off again. "Cut me, tear me," he cried to the executioner. "I fear thee not; I fear the fire of Hell, not thee." Bastwick's wife stood by, received his ears in her lap, and kissed him. Burton spoke on religion while his ears were being cut off, and afterwards, as they carried him into a house, said, "It is too hot to last."

Cromwell meanwhile had moved from St Ives to Ely, on the death of his mother's brother, from whom he inherited a good property and a comfortable mansion. He now found some scope for action in championing a district in the fens which the Earl of Bedford wished to clear of its inhabitants in order to construct a drainage system. Cromwell's

opposition, which included a great protest meeting in Huntingdon, was successful, earning him the nickname of "The Lord of the Fens." Hampden was much impressed by his cousin's ability, said of him that he was "an active man, and one that would sit well at the mark," and probably had this episode in mind when, at the opening of the Long Parliament, he replied to a peer who asked him the name of the sloven that had just spoken: "That sloven whom you see before you hath no ornament in his speech; but that sloven, I say, if we should ever come to a breach with the King (which God forbid), in such case, I say, that sloven will be the greatest man in England."

## 5

How little Charles understood or allowed for the feelings and convictions of others was shown in 1637, when he approved Laud's attempt to extend to Scotland the church system he was enforcing in England. That the land of his early years and lasting affection was fiercely Calvinist and anti-liturgical had either escaped Charles's notice or slipped his memory.

On July 23, one of Laud's bishops opened the service at St Giles' Kirk, Edinburgh, with "Let us read the Collect of the Day." "Thou foul thief!" cried a woman in the congregation, Jenny Geddes, "wilt thou say Mass at my lug?" and hurled her stool at his head. From this abrupt beginning the Scottish revolt spread quickly, and within a few months nearly the whole country had subscribed the National Covenant, denouncing all the doctrines and practices of Rome. After many months of inconclusive negotiating, the king raised some forces and marched north, but finding himself faced by a well-organised army, flying pennons inscribed with *For Christ's Crown and Covenant*, he concluded a treaty. Disputes about its interpretation soon broke out. The Covenanters, encouraged by Cardinal Richelieu with promises of French help, were captious and argumentative; and Strafford, who had long been trying to make the king apply in England the policy of Thorough which he had been carrying out in Ireland, told Charles that he must whip the Scots back to their senses. He returned to Ireland for money and troops, and Charles went back to London, where, in April 1640, he summoned Parliament. His hope was that Parliament, when he told them the Scots were asking Richelieu for help, would be indignant, and vote him money and supplies. Parliament, however, was unmoved, and though moderate and loyal in tone insisted that its grievances should be remedied before it voted any money. Having dissolved it, after a session of only three weeks, the king got together an army of sorts and marched north again.

The troops, who called the campaign The Bishops War, were mutinous, cheered Puritan preachers in the towns they marched through, and emptied the furniture of liturgical clergymen out of the window. Strafford joined the king, but never, he said, came any man to so lost a business: the army altogether unexercised and unprovided of all necessities, the horse all cowardly, a universal affright in all, a general disaffection to the king's service, none sensible of his dishonour. Meanwhile the Scots had crossed the Border, and were occupying Northumberland and Durham, so Charles went back to London and summoned the Parliament later known as the Long Parliament, which met on November 3, 1640.

In the arguments on law and precedent which at once broke out Cromwell took no part. He was forty-one, and if ever the gifts for action which had scathed within him so long were to be exercised, there was no time to be lost. A servant of William Prynne's had been imprisoned, and Cromwell fell upon this incident with a violence of which another member, Sir Philip Warwick, gave a vivid account: "I came into the House one morning well clad, and perceived a gentleman speaking whom I knew not, very ordinarily apparelled, for it was a plain cloth suit which seemed to be made by an ill country tailor; his linen was plain, and not very clean; and I remember a speck or two of blood upon his little band. . . . His stature was of a good size; his sword stuck close to his side; his countenance swollen and reddish, his voice sharp and untuneable." Cromwell, says Warwick, spoke so that one might have believed the Government itself endangered by the man's imprisonment—"his eloquence full of fervour, for the subject matter would not bear much of reason."

Trusting to the king's promise that Parliament should not touch him, Strafford left the army in York and came up to London to charge his enemies with inviting the Scots into England. The afternoon that he reached town, Pym struck, impeaching him at the bar of the House of Lords for high treason. There was no arguable case against him, but, as a Parliamentarian said, "Why should he have law himself that would not that others should have it?" A few weeks later he was executed, the king assenting. "His mishaps were that he groaned under the public envy of the nobles, and served a mild and gracious prince who knew not how to be or to be made great," said Laud, whom Parliament contented itself, for the time being, with putting into prison.

Meanwhile Charles was agreeing to a number of Bills which abolished the Prerogative Courts, the right to levy shipmoney, and generally the power of the king to act on his own initiative. These concessions had an appeasing effect on both Houses, and the milder Parliamentarians began

to draw away from the extremists who, Cromwell among them, were pushing forward proposals for the abolition of bishops and the extirpation of superstition and idolatry, a campaign which resulted in the defacement and partial destruction of cathedrals and great churches throughout England. Instead of improving his position with the moderate Parliamentarians, Charles went up to Scotland, hoping to conciliate the Covenanters, and with their help subdue Parliament. His project was suspected by Parliament, who protested without effect against his absence, and were further alienated when he announced through his Secretary of State that he was firmly resolved to maintain the discipline and doctrine of the Church of England as established by Queen Elizabeth and his father. While Parliament and Charles's hoped-for allies, the Covenanters, were digesting this challenge, a rebellion flared up in Ireland.

Scottish and English colonists, planted in Ulster early in the century, had for many years been dispossessing the old chieftains and original inhabitants without scruple or mercy. Ulster was full of wandering and desperate outlaws, in the rest of Ireland the Puritan authorities were reversing the tolerant attitude of Strafford towards the Catholics, numbers of priests and friars were arriving from Spain to stir up trouble, and the whole country was on the verge of an outbreak. Suddenly, on October 23, 1641, the Irish in Ulster fell on the colonists, killing some thousands in a few weeks. The revolt spread through the country, and was exacerbated, after the first shock, by the Puritans, who reckoned that the more extensive the conflict, the greater the subsequent forfeitures of land.

A rumour went through England that one of the Ulster chieftains held a commission from Charles; this was linked to the fact of the queen's Catholicism, and she was pictured in close touch with the priests of Baal who across St George's Channel were hounding on their flocks to murder old men and women and dash out the brains of infants against walls. The king, returning from Scotland, was presented by Parliament with a Grand Remonstrance, which, however, was passed only by a small majority. But in the next few weeks popular feeling grew increasingly intense, there were clashes between the king's guards and the City apprentices, and the bishops as they went into the House of Lords had their gowns torn from their backs.

Cromwell is reported to have said that if the Grand Remonstrance had been rejected, he would have sold all he had and left England. It was the decisive challenge, if not to the monarchy, yet to a king supported by a bishop-governed Church. The king understood its meaning, and thinking the best way out of his difficulties would be to arrest the chief Parliamentarians, went down to the House, on January 4, 1642, to seize Pym,

Hampden and three other members. On the previous day he had sent a demand that they should be handed over to him as traitors who had invited the Scots to invade England, so when he arrived at the House, with three or four hundred armed men, the five members were absent. As the Speaker refused to tell Charles whether they were in the House or not, the king examined the benches himself, said he saw that all his birds were flown, but he would take his own course to find them, and left, looking angry and confused.

## 6

Ten days later, Pym moved that the House should go into committee on the state of the kingdom, and Cromwell moved the consideration of means to put the kingdom into a posture of defence. In the mind of Pym, as in the country generally, there was uncertainty, foreboding and reluctance before the threat of civil war, but Cromwell at once set about preparing for the fight. He got a Dutch officer to teach him drill, he collected a troop of horse and began to train them, and in July, some weeks before Charles raised his standard at Nottingham, he sent arms into Cambridgeshire, and a little later seized the magazine of ammunition in the castle at Cambridge, and impounded the university plate, valued at £20,000.

The moderate Parliamentarians, who directed the war in its opening phase, wished only to conserve what they had won from Charles in the first year of the Long Parliament. The two chief noblemen on their side, Manchester and Essex, commander-in-chief of the army, wanted a temperate conflict which, while safeguarding London and other important centres, would not exasperate the king to the point of hanging them should he gain a decisive victory. The king also, whatever his private intentions, expressed himself mildly at the outset. From the aims set forth by the opposing parties, it might have been supposed that each was fighting in the interests of the other; Charles declaring that he was contending for "the true reformed Protestant religion, the known laws of the land, the liberty and property of the subject, and the just privileges and freedom of Parliament," Parliament that it was contending for "the preservation of the public peace, and for the defence of the King and both Houses of Parliament." Such being the prevailing temper, the first battle of the war, at Edgehill in October 1642, was vague and indecisive, with more plundering than fighting on the king's side, and less fighting than running away on the Parliament's. It was after this encounter, in which he held his ground throughout the day, that Cromwell told Hampden Parliament would have to get fighters of a different kind if it wished to

beat the king. "I told him," Cromwell recounted many years later, "I would be serviceable to him in bringing such men in as I thought had a spirit that would do something in the work. . . . I told him so ; I did truly. He was a wise and worthy person ; and he did think that I talked a good notion, but an impracticable one."

Returning to his own country, Cromwell set about organising the Eastern Association, which included Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Herts and Huntingdonshire, and in the course of 1643 was extended to Lincolnshire. Puritan feeling was strong in the east of England, and not only among the older people, some young men and girls in the summer of 1643 sending Cromwell £120 as a contribution to a foot company. At this stage of the war Cromwell made good use of the prevailing enthusiasm, writing to a colleague who was uneasy at men of low birth getting commissions: "Best to have men patient of wants, faithful and conscientious in their employments. I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than that which is called a gentleman and is nothing else." But to another colleague, who had suspended an officer for holding wrong religious opinions, Cromwell wrote: "The State in choosing men to serve it takes no notice of their opinions ; if they be willing faithfully to serve it, that satisfies." As the war advanced, his troops included unemployed, pressed men and Royalist deserters, but the newcomers soon became absorbed into the whole created by severe discipline and unvarying success in the field.

Cromwell was forty-three when the war started, and forty-four when he won his first victory, at Grantham in May 1643. In addition to his marches and battles, he had to cope with the lethargy, timidity and close-fistedness of the local authorities scattered over the Eastern Association. "I am neglected exceedingly !" he writes in one letter, in which he says he has spent eleven or twelve hundred of his own money. In another letter he writes: "I am sorry I should so often trouble you about the business of money: it's no pleasant subject to be too frequent upon." In a third: "I press not hard ; though I do so need that, I assure you, the foot and dragoners are ready to mutiny. Lay not too much upon the back of a poor gentleman, who desires, without much noise, to lay down his life, and bleed the last drop to serve the Cause and you." One of his longest letters deals with complaints that his officers, in particular a Captain Margery, were picking up horses where they found them. He would not undertake, he replied, to justify all Captain Margery's actions, "but his own conscience knows whether he hath taken the horses of any but Malignants." Realising that the conscience of Captain Margery was just

what the complainants were worrying about, he admitted that Margery might not be the best judge of who was or was not a Malignant, yet, where a man had "the plain character of a Malignant," it was hard that Captain Margery and the others should be followed with such bitterness. At this point his impatience burst out: "If these men be accounted 'troublesome to the Country,' I should be glad you would send them all to me. I'll bid them welcome. And when they have fought for you: and endured some other difficulties of war which your 'honestest' men will hardly bear, I pray you then let them go for honest men!" The letter dies away on a conciliatory note, suggesting a man who can be patient where he loves: "I have hitherto found your kindness great to me:—I know not what I have done to lose it; I love it so well, and price it so high, that I would do my best to gain more."

The campaign in Lincolnshire which Cromwell was fighting during these months saved the Parliamentary cause, elsewhere worsted at every point, Bristol and Exeter falling to the Royalists in the west, Bedford and Northampton in the Midlands, and the Earl of Newcastle shutting Fairfax up in Hull. Having routed a force twice the size of his own at Grantham, Cromwell pushed on to relieve Gainsborough. On July 28th, after a march of fifty-five miles, he came upon a large body of the enemy's horse, posted between him and the town, under the command of Cavendish, a young relative of Newcastle. Behind the main body, which Cromwell at once charged and broke, there was a reserve of horse; and while most of his men were pursuing the scattering main body, Cromwell stayed behind to deal with the reserve. For this purpose he had kept back some mounted Lincolners, and three troops of his own. Having sent the Lincolners forward against Cavendish, who was with the reserve, he waited, watching the perplexity of Cavendish, who did not know whether to face towards the oncoming Lincolners or towards Cromwell's immobile troops. "At last," Cromwell narrates, "General Cavendish charged the Lincolners, and routed them. Immediately I fell on his rear with my three troops; which did so astonish him, that he gave over the chase, and would fain have delivered himself from me. But I pressing on forced them down a hill, having good execution of them; and below the hill, drove the General with some of his soldiers into a quagmire; where my Captain-lieutenant slew him with a thrust under his short ribs. The rest of the body was wholly routed, not one man staying upon the place."

Having relieved Gainsborough, Cromwell left Lord Willoughby in command there, but Newcastle, advancing with a large army, retook the town. Except perhaps at Dunbar, Cromwell was never in so desperate

a position as now. With few troops, and those exhausted by the marches and battles of the preceding weeks, he was the only barrier between Newcastle and London. The letters he sent to the committees of the Eastern Association during the next few days show his situation: "If I could speak words to pierce your hearts, with the sense of our and your condition, I would! . . . If somewhat be not done in this, you will see Newcastle's army march up into your bowels."—"It's no longer disputing, but out instantly all you can! Raise all your bands; send them to Huntingdon:—get up what volunteers you can; hasten your horses. . . . Almost all our foot have quitted Stamford: there is nothing to interrupt an enemy, but our horse, that is considerable. You must act lively; do it without distraction."—"I beseech you hasten your levies, what you can; especially those of foot! . . . Gentlemen, make them able to live and subsist that are willing to spend their blood for you."

The day after this last appeal the House of Commons took measures to raise the infantry of the Eastern Association to ten thousand, and appointed the Earl of Manchester its commanding-officer, with four colonels of horse, Cromwell being one. A week or so later, to secure military help from Scotland, the House concluded a Solemn League and Covenant with the Scots, binding themselves to impose with their allies a Presbyterian uniformity throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. Parliament would have preferred a purely civil alliance, the milder Parliamentarians disliking the Covenanters because they were fanatics, and the extremists disliking them because they were Scots, but they were not in a position to bargain.

Meanwhile things were going better with Cromwell, who wrote to a friend in the second week of September: "My troops increase. I have a lovely company." Relieving Fairfax in Hull, he returned into Lincolnshire, and at Winceby inflicted a defeat on the Royalists which cleared them out of Lincolnshire for the rest of the war. Cromwell led the charge, his horse was shot under him, and as he got to his feet he was knocked down, but jumping up seized a horse, and disembarassing it of its rider, whether one of his own men or an enemy soldier is not clear, joined the charge again. The battle over, Manchester arrived with the foot troops. He was a quiet, meek man, a contemporary says, who "permitted his lieutenant-general, Cromwell, to guide all the army at his pleasure. Being a known Independent, the most of the soldiers, who loved new ways, put themselves under his command."

The word Independent, which was now coming into use, covered the various sects of which the army was composed, and also expressed the growing opposition of the army to the Parliament. Systematised

forms of worship did not attract Cromwell or his soldiers, but it does not follow from this that the army was of a more tolerant temper than Parliament. While the army wanted to be independent of Parliament, Parliament soon desired at least as earnestly to be independent of the army, and neither body encouraged independence in third parties. Cromwell's tolerance, of which much has been said, amounted to no more than a willingness that a man should follow his conscience, provided his conscience followed Cromwell.

In accordance with the terms of the Solemn League and Covenant, Cromwell's soldiers went through the counties of the Eastern Association destroying stained-glass windows, carvings and statues, and harrying liturgical divines. The suppression of the Choir service at Ely Cathedral was undertaken by Cromwell himself, who wrote as follows to the Reverend Hitch, with whom as an old neighbour he was no doubt well acquainted :

"I require you to forbear altogether your Choir-service, so unedifying and offensive. . . . I advise you to catechise, and read and expound the Scripture to the people; not doubting but the Parliament, with the advice of the Assembly of Divines, will direct you farther. I desire your sermons too, where usually they have been,—but more frequent.

Your loving friend,

OLIVER CROMWELL."

Mr Hitch ignoring this letter, Cromwell, his hat on and some soldiers behind him, entered the cathedral, and called out : "I am a man under Authority, and am commanded to dismiss this Assembly." Mr Hitch continuing with the service, Cromwell shouted, "Leave off your fooling, and come down, Sir!", whereupon Mr Hitch left the pulpit and walked out of the cathedral, followed by his congregation.

7

In January 1644 twenty thousand Scots under General Leslie crossed the Border, and forced the Royalists down into Yorkshire. Withdrawing his men into York, Newcastle held out for a time against Leslie, Fairfax and an army of the Eastern Association under Manchester and Cromwell. Towards the end of June, Prince Rupert, the great cavalry leader on the king's side, brought a large army into Yorkshire, and joining up with Newcastle engaged the Parliamentary forces at Marston Moor on July 2. It was a desperate battle, and even more confused than desperate,

the chief officers on both sides all, with the exception of Cromwell, being at one time or another fugitives from the field. But it ended in a complete victory for Parliament. "Give glory, all the glory, to God," Cromwell wrote afterwards in a letter which, but for this sentence, might have conveyed the impression that all the glory was Cromwell's, neither the large numbers nor the stubborn fighting of the Scots figuring in Cromwell's account: "We never charged but we routed the enemy. The Left Wing, which I commanded, being our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, beat all the Prince's horse. God made them as stubble to our swords."

Marston Moor secured the north for Parliament, but in the months that followed things went badly for Parliament elsewhere. In September Essex lost an army in the west, and in October Manchester fought a feeble battle at Newbury, allowing the king to withdraw in good order with much inferior forces. At the beginning of the year Cromwell had attacked Lord Willoughby in the House, Willoughby being at that time second in importance to Manchester in the Eastern Association. He had strangely dissolute people about him, Cromwell said, and was a great sorrow to Lincolnshire. Willoughby was relieved of his command, and after the battle of Newbury, Cromwell decided that Manchester and Essex must go too. To get these great landowning aristocrats out of the way seemed to him essential to a victory, as opposed to the respectful and considerate arrangement with Charles which Essex and Manchester desired, and which, apart from his other objections to it, would have been personally harmful to Cromwell, for he had not concealed his sentiments either about Charles or Manchester, telling Manchester that he hoped to live to see never a nobleman in England, and declaring that if he met the king in battle he would fire his pistol at him as readily as at anyone else.

At the end of November 1644, Cromwell, speaking in the Commons, charged Manchester with having always been indisposed and backward to engagements, and the ending of the war by the sword. In his defence Manchester quoted Cromwell's revolutionary view of the aristocracy, and his readiness to shoot the king in battle, and went on to suggest that the failure at Newbury was due to Cromwell's backwardness, not to his own.

About a fortnight later the House met again, to come to a definite decision about the high command. There was a constrained silence for a good space of time, and then Cromwell rose. "It is now a time to speak, or forever hold the tongue," he began. 'The kingdom was wearying of Parliament, and the enemy was saying that the members of both Houses, having got great places and commands, would perpetuate themselves in grandeur, lingering the war out, lest their own power should determine with it. It would be imprudent, he continued, to make a strict enquiry

into past oversights. What was necessary was to find the remedy—"And I hope we have such true English hearts, and zealous affections towards the general weal of our Mother Country, as no Members of either House will scruple to deny themselves, and their own private interests, for the public good."

Having thus attuned the House to a spirit of abnegation, Cromwell sat down, and a Mr Zouch Tate, member for Northampton, rose and moved a Self-Denying Ordinance, by the terms of which all members of both Houses were excluded from holding army commands. Perhaps influenced by the fact that Cromwell would be among those who would lose their commands, Parliament passed this measure, which made the army henceforth virtually independent of Parliament, and also of the Covenant with the Scots, one of the clauses dispensing recruits from taking the Covenant unless moved to. Indignant over this clause, the Scottish commissioners asked privately if Cromwell could not be prosecuted as an incendiary, but it appeared there were no legal grounds for such a proceeding.

The new army, which was known as the New Model army, was commanded by Fairfax, who spent the first three months of 1645 organising it. Under the old leaders the Parliamentary army had been a loose association of local volunteers, serving their territorial chiefs. Now it was a single unit, led by men who trusted to force alone to get what they wanted—what they wanted being in practice anything which either king or Parliament tried to prevent them getting.

A Parliamentary committee having asked Cromwell, at whose instance is not known, whether he would attack a Royalist convoy, Cromwell, who was about to lay down his command, consented, and a few days later reported to the committee that he had captured two hundred foot soldiers, four hundred horse, and a great deal of ammunition. "I hope," the report concluded, "you will pardon me if I say, God is not enough owned." Where God ended and Cromwell began was already beginning to puzzle people, but the implication of this sentence was fairly clear, and Cromwell's command was prolonged for forty days, then for another forty days, then for three months, and then left to shift for itself.

On June 13, Cromwell joined Fairfax at Gillsborough, Fairfax's cavalry giving a great shout of joy as he rode up. The next day he and Fairfax met the king at Naseby, and defeated him so decisively that he never again appeared at the head of an army in the field. After the battle Cromwell, by virtue of being the only M.P. present at the fight, or, alternatively, the only army officer who was also an M.P., sent a report to the Speaker, commending the courage Fairfax had shown in the engage-

ment, and advising Parliament not to discourage the men fighting for it by limiting their liberty of conscience. He wished, he said, the action might beget humility in all concerned in it, a wish no doubt shared by the Speaker, and perhaps also by Fairfax.

The next twelve months were spent by Cromwell and Fairfax in hunting down enemy contingents throughout the country, storming Royalist towns and destroying Royalist castles and manor-houses. "The Lord grant that these mercies may be acknowledged with all thankfulness," Cromwell wrote to the Speaker, after his troops had plundered Basing House and set fire to what was left of it; "God exceedingly abounds in His goodness to us, and will not be weary until peace and righteousness meet." Under the pressure of these unceasing mercies the king's nerve gave out, and towards the close of April 1646, having had his hair and beard cut short, and disguising himself as a servant, he left Oxford, drifted about for a few days, wondering if he should go back to London, got as far as Harrow, and then turned north, surrendering himself to the Scots at Newark. In August, Ragland Castle, the last Royalist stronghold, surrendered, and the First Civil War was over.

## 8

In a letter of religious counsel to one of his daughters, Cromwell once wrote: "To be a Seeker is to be of the best Sect next to a Finder, and such an one shall every faithful, humble Seeker be at the end. Happy Seeker, happy Finder!" In politics also he was a seeker, scanning the ground near him for anything worth finding, and not tied to any definite itinerary. "No man," he said, "ever climbs so high as when he knows not whither he is going," a remark which Cardinal Retz, a man with clear-cut political ambitions which he failed to realise, said could only have come from a madman.

For some months after the king's surrender to the Scots Cromwell spent most of his time in Parliament, watching things sorting themselves out. Meanwhile Charles was trying to get the Covenanters to help him, and at the same time resolutely refusing to comply with their conditions, which included the enforcement of the Covenant throughout the three kingdoms, and a proscription of most of the king's staunchest friends. In between his arguments with the Covenanters, Charles engaged in a number of other plans, most of which came to the knowledge both of his hosts and of the Parliament in London. Ten thousand Irishmen were to descend on the Lowlands, and raise a revolt in the north of England; the King of Denmark was to invade the north of Scotland with a force

of Dutchmen; a large French army was to join the Royalist remnant in Cornwall, and so on.

In January 1647, in return for receiving the arrears of pay due to their troops, the Scots handed Charles over to Parliament, which assigned him a residence at Holmby in Northamptonshire. Although Charles and Parliament had different views about the form of a national Church, they both believed in one, and shared the same fear and dislike of the sectaries of the army. An accommodation between them seemed possible, and as a first safeguard against interference from the army the City magnates, who with Presbyterian divines and lawyers made up most of Parliament, raised a force of City troops. The next step, in May 1647, was a Parliamentary vote disbanding the army, with eight weeks' pay, though fifty or sixty were overdue.

A few days later Cromwell left London for the army headquarters at Newmarket, and on the same day Cornet Joyce with five hundred men went to Holmby, took the king from the Parliamentary commissioners, and returned to Newmarket with him. Accompanied by the king, the army moved towards London, halting at St Albans, from which place a letter, written by Cromwell and signed by the chief officers, was sent to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City. The Lord Mayor might suppose, Cromwell wrote, that a rich city would seem an enticing bait to poor hungry soldiers, and that the army was more concerned about its pay than about the Public Good. That was not so. It would be an act of Fellow-Subjects and Brethren if the Lord Mayor and Aldermen would solicit Parliament on the soldiers' behalf, but if, after this brotherly premonition, they opposed or hindered the soldiers, those in command of the army must wash their hands of what ruin might befall their great and populous City.

Both the City and Parliament showed themselves willing to treat with the army; Parliament even complying with a demand that it should eject eleven Presbyterian leaders, among them Holles, one of the Five Members Charles had tried to arrest. But the apprentices, sailors and watermen who had just been recruited by the City merchants showed more spirit than their masters, and rushing into the Commons demanded that the eleven Presbyterian leaders should be recalled and the king invited to London with honour, freedom and safety. A number of M.P.s, including the Speakers of both Houses, fled to the army, begging its protection, and on August 3 the army marched to Westminster and on through the City, horse, foot and artillery, with drums, trumpets and colours.

Cromwell's chief concern now was to limit the power of the army,

which contained many extremists who, seeing the old order in ruins, began to dream of a perfect society based on the natural right of all men to happiness and security. Already in May Cromwell had urged the officers to strengthen the deference of the men for Parliament; in July he told the Agitators, as the extremists were called, that he looked upon what was gained by force as nothing; and in October he and Ireton, formerly a lawyer and now Cromwell's chief colleague, had a series of conferences with the Agitators, who had presented Cromwell with two manifestoes: "The Case of the Army Stated" and "An Agreement of the People." The Agitators, mistrusting the frequent interviews which were taking place between Cromwell and the captive king, demanded a republican House of Commons, chosen by universal suffrage. "So you stand," said Ireton to one of the deputation, "not on civil right but on natural right, and, for my part, I think that no right at all. Nobody has a right to a share in disposing the affairs of this kingdom unless he has a permanent fixed interest in the kingdom." To this the Agitator replied: "I find nothing in the law of God that a lord shall choose twenty burgesses, and gentlemen only two, and a poor man none." "But then," Ireton exclaimed, "if you are on natural right, show me what difference lies between a right to vote and a right to subsistence." Apparently the Agitator saw no difference, for the extremists yielded nothing to Ireton and Cromwell, and returning to their regiments carried a motion in favour of manhood suffrage.

Cromwell, who a little earlier had told the House of Commons that it was a matter of urgency to restore the monarchy, now let it be known by the army that in his opinion neither king nor lords should be kept, if to do so were a danger to the public interest.

A fortnight or so later, in circumstances which have remained obscure, the king vanished from Hampton Court, where Cromwell had placed him, and turned up the next day at Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight. Whether or not Charles was, as some thought, in danger of being assassinated by the extremists, it was certainly in Cromwell's interest to remove him to some distance from the army, and as the Governor of Carisbrooke Castle was an old friend of Cromwell's it may be assumed that Cromwell arranged the flight. When the news of it reached the army, two regiments paraded with papers in their hats, bearing the words "England's freedom and soldiers' rights." Riding up to the mutineers, Cromwell ordered them to take the papers out, and one of the regiments refusing, he called eleven men by name out of the ranks, condemned three to death by court-martial, made them throw dice for their lives, and had the loser shot.

Shortly after reaching Carisbrooke Castle, Charles, who was not strictly confined until within a few weeks of his death, made a secret treaty with the Duke of Hamilton, a moderate Presbyterian. In accordance with this agreement, and in spite of opposition from the extreme Covenanters, Hamilton persuaded the Parliament at Edinburgh to raise an army for the defence of the king and Covenant, and the suppression of Cromwell and the English Independents. Charles had now some reason for hope. With the army divided, Parliament discredited, the whole of England sick of Puritan regimentation and in many places openly Royalist, and twenty thousand Scots collecting to rescue him, it looked as if his triumph was nearing. But, as often happens, the factor which seemed most in his favour led to his destruction. The threat from the Scots unified the army, and the Second Civil War, which opened in April 1648 with outbreaks in Wales, Kent and Essex, was over by the autumn, Cromwell with nine thousand men destroying a mixed Scottish and English army, nearly three times the size of his, in a battle which began at Preston and ended three days later in the south of Lancashire. Marching into Scotland, he came to terms with Hamilton's enemies, the extreme Covenanters, and leaving an ultra-Presbyterian party in power in Edinburgh, returned with his Independents to grapple with the English Presbyterians, who during his absence had been negotiating with the king.

From the constitutional standpoint there was no reason why the king should not negotiate with what was, after all, his own Parliament, so, feeling himself on firm theoretic ground, Charles did not allow the return of the victorious army to accelerate the conferences on church government over which he was presiding with cheerful courtliness. At last, on November 27, an agreement between Charles and the fifteen Parliamentary commissioners was reached. Four days later a group of army officers removed the king from the Isle of Wight, placing him in strict confinement in an out-of-the-way Hampshire castle; and before another week had passed, a purge of Parliament, carried out by Colonel Pride, reduced it from three hundred and fifty members to fifty-three, some of whom were army officers filtered into the Commons since Naseby. On the evening of this purge Cromwell arrived in London from Yorkshire, and after stating that he had not been acquainted with Pride's design added that, since it was done, he was glad of it, and would endeavour to maintain it.

Within less than eight weeks the king was executed, an act which terrified the Courts of Europe, disgusted most Englishmen, and has never ceased to arouse violent emotions, for and against the two chief persons concerned. The partisans of Cromwell have represented him as hurried

into this deed by a sudden realisation that he had to do with a man of incurable duplicity, but had obliqueness in political dealings afflicted Cromwell like this, he would very early in his career have turned into a homicidal maniac, had he not first laid violent hands upon himself. What must have weighed with him most was the necessity not to estrange the army again by renewing his negotiations with Charles. He had to choose between the army and Charles, and naturally chose the army. Having taken his decision, he pushed forward with his usual impetus, setting up a tribunal which was voted into existence by less than half the members left in the Commons after the purge, and shouting at Algernon Sidney, who questioned the legality of this tribunal, "I tell you, we will cut the king's head off with the crown upon it."

## 9

Within a few weeks of the king's death, the House of Lords was abolished and England proclaimed a free commonwealth, to be governed by the representatives of the people in Parliament, without king or Upper House. Executive power was entrusted to a Council of State, composed of members of Parliament and high army officers.

This was not the new world which the extremists expected to rise from the ruins of the old, and the army began again to break up into groups of agitators, all preaching millenniums of one kind or another. There were religious millenarians, known as the Fifth Monarchists, who believed that the reign of Christ and His saints, themselves, was imminent in a fifth and final monarchy; and there were the Levellers, who were of two kinds, social levellers and political. For the time being the Fifth Monarchists did not cause Cromwell any practical inconvenience, and the social levellers were more of an irritation than an anxiety, their aims not being such as to attract great numbers of ordinary men. Proclaiming that all land should be held in common and that every man should produce his own food and clothing, the social levellers set out into the country, and started digging on the hills near Cobham. Having had a number of them arrested and brought before him, Cromwell asked their leader, Everard, to explain his intentions. The liberties of the people, Everard replied, had been lost ever since William the Conqueror came to England. Like other Saxons, he was of Jewish origin, and now was the time of deliverance for the People of God. He and those with him were restoring the ancient community of the fruits of the earth, distributing the benefits thereof to the poor and needy—"And for all such as will come in and work with us, they shall have meat, drink, and clothes, which is all that is necessary to the

life of man : and as for money, there is not any need of it ; nor of clothes more than to cover nakedness."

During this speech Everard kept his hat on, and Cromwell asking why he did not take it off, Everard answered, because Cromwell was only his fellow-creature. What meaning, Cromwell asked, did Everard attach to the words "Give honour where honour is due" ? To which Everard replied that the mouths of them that asked such questions would bestopped.

Less exasperating but more dangerous were the political levellers, whose spokesman was an intractable pamphleteer, John Lilburne, who in "England's New Chains Discovered" and "The Hunting of the Foxes by Five Small Beagles" attacked Cromwell and his colleagues, the foxes being Cromwell and the army command, and the beagles five troopers who had recently been punished for seditious harangues. Lilburne quickly became a popular hero, and when he was brought up for trial he told the judges that it was not for them but for the jury to pronounce the verdict. As there was a huge crowd round the Guild Hall, the judges acquiesced in this ruling, the jury acquitted Lilburne, and the crowd cheered for half an hour. In the army there were three mutinies among the followers of Lilburne, and though they were promptly suppressed, it must have been obvious to Cromwell that the army was badly in need of another war.

He had a wide choice of enemies, two of the ambassadors of the new commonwealth having been murdered on the Continent, Scotland having recognised Prince Charles as king, and Ireland, except for Dublin and a few beleaguered garrisons elsewhere, declaring its independence of England. In a speech to the Council of State, two months after the king's death, Cromwell said : "I confess I had rather be overrun with a Cavalierish interest than a Scotch interest ; I had rather be overrun with a Scotch interest than an Irish interest ; and I think, of all, this is the most dangerous." Being intensely English and Protestant, Cromwell would no doubt have rather been overrun by Cavaliers or Scots than by Irishmen, but it is unlikely that he was as apprehensive as he said about Ireland, a country which has never fallen upon England. A campaign in Ireland had for him advantages not to be found elsewhere. It would get the army right away from Lilburne, it would focus their religious zeal on Irish Papists, and when the campaign was over, the settlement of the soldiery on the lands of the expropriated natives would abate their social and political discontents.

On July 10, 1649, Cromwell set off for Dublin, the streets of London resounding with trumpets as he passed in a coach drawn by six Flanders mares, a lifeguard of eighty men in attendance, and the chief officers of the army riding behind.

The Irish leader, the Earl of Ormonde, a patient and able man, had succeeded in uniting practically the whole of Ireland, Catholics of the Pale, Catholics beyond the Pale, English Protestants and Ulster Presbyterians, against the regicides. To threaten supplies from England, should Cromwell proceed inland or to the south, Ormonde put over three thousand of his best troops into Drogheda, a seaport town twenty-three miles north of Dublin. Drogheda was strongly fortified, and its commander, Sir Arthur Ashton, an English Catholic, said that he would be able to hold it against all the power of Cromwell. Arriving before it on September 3, Cromwell began to bombard it in earnest on the 10th. On the 11th two breaches were made, and nearly a thousand of Cromwell's men rushed into them, but after a long and stubborn struggle were driven out. Summoning some reserves, Cromwell, who was in his fifty-first year, put himself at their head; they advanced with the word "Our Lord God," and after a hard fight, Cromwell being supported only by foot soldiers and the garrison having horse as well, they drove the enemy into the town. Ashton, dislodged from a strong point, was, by Cromwell's orders, killed with all his companions. The rest of the garrison retreating into the northern part of the town, about a thousand of them took refuge in St Peter's Church. Cromwell ordered them to be put to the sword; and eighty of them climbing up into the steeple, Cromwell had the steeple set on fire. Thirty died in the flames, and the rest were killed as they came down.

The slaughter went on for three days, ceasing when no one was left to slaughter. According to Hugh Peters, Cromwell's chaplain, 3552 of the enemy were killed, 64 of Cromwell's men. Even the sack of Magdeburg by Tilly, the most notorious episode in the Thirty Years War, was not so prolonged or so wholesale.

In the narrative he sent to the Speaker, Cromwell wrote: "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future. Which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret." The "innocent blood" was the blood of the Ulster colonists, killed in the rising of the natives they had ruined. Some months later Cromwell recurred to this rising, which he described as "the most unheard-of and most barbarous massacre that ever the Sun beheld. And at a time when Ireland was in perfect Peace." His own words, quoted earlier, show what he really felt about the provocations the native Irish had suffered, but even if his horror at the Ulster rising had been sincere, he had no grounds for connecting Ashton and his garrison with it,

men whom, elsewhere in his letter to the Speaker, he described as "the flower of their army."

Nor did the effusion of blood at Drogheda prevent the effusion of blood elsewhere. Wexford, refusing to yield to Cromwell's threats, suffered the same fate as Drogheda, and at the close of his Irish campaign Cromwell lost two thousand men in the siege of Clonmel, by far the greatest loss he ever sustained. From other than a humanitarian standpoint, his campaign was the most successful ever waged in Ireland by an Englishman, and when he left the whole island, except a few places in the west, had been subdued. The subsequent settlement, when the native Irish were driven into the wastes of Connaught or shipped as slaves to the West Indies to make room for the Puritans who had invested money in the campaign and the soldiers who had fought in it, sunk more deeply into the spirit of the nation than anything else in their history, the memory of it being preserved to this day in the saying "The curse of Cromwell."

From Cork, early in January 1650, Cromwell wrote a letter to Lord Wharton, a rich peer who had recently resigned from the Council of State. Wharton was feeling uneasy about a good many things, beginning with the execution of the king and no doubt extending to the massacres at Drogheda and Wexford, a method of settling differences which he would not wish to see naturalised in England. Do not, Cromwell wrote to him, be offended at the manner of God's working. God had accepted the zeal of Phinehas (a Jew of the Exodus who thrust his sword through another Jew and the Midianitish woman he was in bed with). Phinehas had not called for a jury, and would not Wharton allow that the Lord had also accepted the zeal of those who were now putting their shoulders to the Lord's work? "You were with us in the Form of things: why not in the Power?"—a Cromwellian way of asking Wharton why, having taken the knocks, he should now jib at the rewards.

"I am persuaded," the letter continues, "your heart hankers after the hearts of your poor Friends; and will, until you can find others to close with." The unpleasant suggestion in the last few words was not lost upon Wharton, whose captious attitude to Cromwell's methods dwindled quickly, for a year or two later he was discussing a marriage between his daughter and Phinehas-Cromwell's second son.

Returning to England at the beginning of June 1650, Cromwell was welcomed in state by a Parliamentary deputation and a number of army

officers, headed by Fairfax, who was still the commander-in-chief in name. Bristol had received Cromwell with salvos of artillery, and London turned into the streets to cheer him as he rode along. Time and absence had softened his share in the king's death, he was no longer the leader of a faction but a conqueror coming home.

To the surprise of the Scots, who had been threatening England for some time, Cromwell instead of resting after Ireland collected an army, marched north and crossed the Border on July 22.

Montrose, a brilliant soldier and a passionate adherent of the Stuarts, had tried to raise Scotland on behalf of Prince Charles while Cromwell was in Ireland. There was a long-standing feud between Montrose and the extreme Covenanters, who, having captured and hanged him, promised their support to Prince Charles, if he would accept the Covenant and denounce his father for resisting the Reformation, and his mother as an idolatress. To these terms, which were coupled with severe provisos about his private conduct, the prince at last assented.

Little though Cromwell liked the Scots, their devotion to the Bible entitled them in his eyes to be wrestled with in the spirit before recourse was had to arms. He began with a "Declaration of the English Army to all the Saints in Scotland." The General Assembly of the Kirk having retorted with a counter-declaration, Cromwell wrote a letter which revealed his rising temper. He reproached the Assembly for the tone of their declaration, accused them of suppressing the affectionate messages he had sent through them to the Scottish people, and begged them, presumably referring to some of their members, to read certain verses in Isaiah, describing priests and prophets who had erred through strong drink and been swallowed up in wine. The Assembly not being pacified by this letter, Cromwell wrote to Leslie, the Scottish general, asking him how the Godly Interest he pretended to represent could be secured by an alliance with the head of the Malignants, a man who at that very instant had a Popish army in Ireland.

As between Bible Protestants, Cromwell's case was much stronger than the Scottish, which consisted of little except abuse of Cromwell as a murderer and of his army as an uncovenanted rabble. But had the Scots been able to lay aside the Puritan convention of not admitting other than religious motives for action, they could have put forward at least as good a case as Cromwell, the issue at stake between the two sides being the independence of Scotland, which the Scots felt would be better secured with Charles than with Cromwell governing England.

His spiritual artillery having failed, Cromwell tried to dislodge Leslie from his strongly entrenched position in Edinburgh. At last, on the

ground that the bad weather made it difficult to get supplies up the Firth of Forth, but probably also in order to draw Leslie out of Edinburgh, Cromwell retired down the Firth to Dunbar. Leslie set off in pursuit, with an army twice the size of Cromwell's, and having completely encircled him except for his rear, which had the sea behind it, waited for Cromwell either to embark or to attack. Apart from their superior numbers, the Scots were stationed on the slopes of the surrounding hills, with the advantage of higher ground over an attacking force.

On the afternoon of September 2, Cromwell wrote an account of his situation to Haselrig, the governor of Newcastle, and advised him to collect what forces he could for his own defence, and apply to London for more—"The business nearly concerneth all Good People." The letter, though explicit about his critical position, was calm. "He was a strong man, in the dark perils of war, in the high places of the field," one of his attendants wrote; "hope shone in him like a pillar of fire, when it had gone out in all the others." After writing to Haselrig, he walked about Dunbar with Lambert, his ablest general, and both of them noticing that the Scottish right wing was beginning to move down from the hills, Cromwell turned to Lambert, saying that this might be the opportunity he had been waiting for. Having drawn up a plan of battle with his officers, he passed the night riding to and fro, placing his troops, and was observed to be biting his lower lip till the blood flowed. The fight began at six in the morning, before seven the Scots began to break, and Cromwell, calling out, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered," halted to collect all his horse, singing while he waited:

O give ye praise unto the Lord,  
All nations that be;  
Likewise ye people all, accord  
His name to magnify.

Shouting and laughing he headed the pursuit, which lasted for eight miles and accounted for some thousands of the fugitives. Three thousand were killed on the field, ten thousand captured. Of the Ironsides only two officers and twenty men had fallen.

In a letter to his wife the next day, Cromwell said he had not leisure for writing at length: "I could chide thee that in many of thy Letters thou writest to me, That I should not be unmindful of thee and thy little ones. Truly, if I love you not too well, I think I err not on the other hand much. Thou art dearer to me than any creature; let that suffice." He was, he added, growing an old man, and felt the infirmities of age marvellously stealing upon him.

In the previous two years he had had attacks of ague, which now

returned so severely as to threaten his life. In February 1651, Parliament sent him their permission to come back to England for a change of air, but looking to the approaching spring to restore his health he decided to stay on. Meanwhile Charles had detached himself from his Presbyterian allies, as Cromwell forecast in a letter written the day after Dunbar: "Surely it's probable the Kirk has done their do. I believe their King will set up on his own score now; wherein he will find many friends." Having with Leslie's assistance raised an army which was composed chiefly of Highland landowners and their retainers, Charles shut himself up in Stirling. Finding it impossible to dislodge him, Cromwell resolved to repeat the device which he had used in the Second Civil War, and tempt the Scots into England by leaving the way open. To reassure Parliament he communicated his intention to them at the beginning of August: "When England was much more unsteady than now, and when a much more considerable Army of theirs, unfoiled, invaded you; and we had but a weak force to make resistance at Preston,—upon deliberate advice, we chose rather to put ourselves between their Army and Scotland: and how God succeeded that, is not well to be forgotten!"

Crossing the Forth, Cromwell captured Perth, cutting off Charles's supplies from the north, and thus giving him an additional reason to leave Stirling for England. There was no enthusiasm for Charles as he marched south, the country people driving off their cattle as he approached, and the county militias mustering to beat off attacks. Losing heart, the prince swerved off to the south-west, and took refuge in Worcester, which was strongly fortified, and further protected by a rapid river. There, on September 3, breaking into the town after a desperate struggle, Cromwell fought his last battle, killing three thousand of the enemy, capturing ten thousand prisoners, and losing less than two hundred of his own men. As usual, he took part in all the fighting, for which he has been blamed by military experts, who write as though it were a form of self-indulgence for a general to share the risks and exertions of his men. To the common soldier it is the final test of a general that he should be as good as any of his men in the fight itself, or, failing this, that he should expose himself to equal dangers. Wellington was not formidable physically, but he won Waterloo by remaining in the danger zone throughout the day, as Napoleon lost it by keeping at a safe distance. Judging from results, Cromwell had as much tactical and strategical genius as any commander in history, but what was unique in his victories, the disparity between his losses and the enemy's, derived from the ferocious ardour of his men, trying to emulate or surpass the prowess of their elderly leader.

## II

In the despatch which he sent to the Speaker, Cromwell wrote of the battle as "a crowning mercy," and went on to hope that Parliament would do the will of Him who had done His will for it: "I am bold humbly to beg, That all thoughts may tend to the promotion of His honour who hath wrought so great salvation; and that the fatness of these continued mercies may not occasion pride and wantonness." From the high tone of this despatch it seemed to many people, including his own chaplain, that Cromwell was now resolved to make himself king, and there can be little doubt that if Parliament had been the only obstacle between Cromwell and the kingship, Worcester would have proved a crowning mercy indeed. But there was also the army, with its millenarian sects, all ready to give tongue again, now that the war was over. How to persuade an army of revolutionary democrats to help him in restoring the monarchy, with himself as monarch, was the problem which faced Cromwell after Worcester, and which there are several signs that he had been considering for some time.

As with most men, Cromwell's democracy stopped at himself. He was ready to pull down the great landowners to his level in 1644, but unwilling that the Agitators should pull him down to their level in 1647. They taught him, however, that the democratic feeling in the army was a factor he must take into account, and his troubles with the Levellers after the king's death pushed the lesson home. Until the Irish campaign Ireton, a lawyer with an anti-democratic bias, had been Cromwell's most intimate colleague, so it is reasonable to assume that in leaving Ireton behind to settle Ireland Cromwell felt that his own task of settling England would now proceed more smoothly. At any rate, during his short stay in England before setting out for Scotland he made an opportunity for a confidential talk with Ludlow, one of the milder extremists among his officers. After admitting that he had been mistaken in trying to negotiate with the king, saying how it had grieved him to take such hard measures against the mutineering troops, and denouncing the tortuous and ungodly jungle of the English law, which served only to oppress the poor and encourage the rich, he went on to speak of the good that might be done by a good and brave man, in which connection he expatiated for nearly an hour on the 110th Psalm ("The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand. . . . Thy people shall be willing in the days of thy power. . . .") A little later, after Dunbar, his maturing conception of himself as the friend and leader of the dispossessed burst out in an exhortation to Parliament: "Relieve the oppressed, hear the

groans of the poor prisoners in England. Be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions; and if there be any who makes many poor to make few rich, that suits not with the Commonwealth."

No doubt he was as sincere in this as any other politician who, in favouring circumstances, has allowed his human sympathies a little air. His chief concern, however, was not to join with Parliament in making the poor happy, but to appear before the army as a man to whom they could safely entrust the realisation of their democratic dreams. The open quarrels in his career were with kings and Parliaments, but from 1649, if not from 1647, his main preoccupation was to keep the russet-coated captains he had once rejoiced in from turning against himself the weapon he had forged against Charles and Parliament.

Two or three months after Worcester he convened a meeting of high army officers and M.P.s to discuss the general situation. An account of this meeting was given in his memoirs by Whitelocke, a Parliamentary member of the Council of State. Lenthall, the Speaker, having opened with some compliments to Cromwell and a hope that a satisfactory settlement of the nation would now be reached, Major-General Harrison, a Fifth Monarchy fanatic, said that the mercies which the Lord had given them must be secured by a settlement of the Civil and Spiritual Liberties of the people. At this point Whitelocke, who was in close touch with Cromwell (a fact not stressed in his account), suggested that the question to be considered was whether the settlement should be absolutely republican, or with any mixture of monarchy. Yes, said Cromwell, that was the question—"Whether a Republic, or a mixed Monarchical Government, will be best to be settled? And if anything monarchical, then, in whom that power shall be placed?"

In the discussion that followed, the Parliamentarians favoured a monarchy, perhaps with one of Charles the First's sons as king, the officers were hostile to a monarchy, and Cromwell inclined to "a Settlement with somewhat of monarchical power in it," but thought it would be a business of no ordinary difficulty to put either of Charles's sons on the throne.

Meanwhile Parliament was the only effective power in the country, to the growing exasperation of the army, who did not see why the Rump, as what was left of the Long Parliament was called, should be the beneficiaries of the exertions and dangers the army had undergone. The war against Holland, which the Rump declared in 1652 and under the direction of Sir Henry Vane waged very efficiently, also angered the army, who were not interested in a maritime struggle for commercial supremacy, and saw in this conflict with a great Protestant republic fresh proof of irreligion

among the lawyers and City men of the Commons. In the August of this year their discontent expressed itself in a petition to the Rump, the gist of which was that the present Parliament should make room for a body which would reform and simplify the law, redress financial abuses, and make satisfactory provision for the preaching of the Gospel. Ten or twelve conferences between the army and the Rump took place in October, without advancing matters, the Parliamentarians finding no difficulty in confusing the plain issues raised by the soldiers. One day about this time Cromwell, walking in St James's Park, met Whitelocke, and they discussed the situation, Whitelocke criticising the imperiousness of the army and Cromwell inveighing against the Rump, a corrupt, greedy, self-seeking body which was interested only in continuing its own power. And some of them scandalous in their lives! What was wanted, he continued, was an authority high enough to check all these exorbitances, and Whitelocke raising some constitutional difficulties, Cromwell burst out: "What if a man should take upon him to be king?"

The army becoming increasingly impatient, Cromwell, spurred on by Harrison and encouraged by Lambert, recommended the Rump to name some fit men who should frame a new constitution, to which Sir Henry Vane replied with the counter-suggestion that the Rump should enlarge itself by adding men of the right sort from the constituencies. The desire of the army being that the Rump should diminish itself, this suggestion was not well received.

On April 20, 1653, while Cromwell and his officers were discussing Vane's proposal, news was brought to them that the Rump was pushing through a Bill which would perpetuate it along the lines sketched by Vane. With Harrison and a company of musketeers, Cromwell hurried to the House, where he found Vane urging that the Bill should be passed without discussion. Taking his usual seat, Cromwell listened for a time to Vane, and then beckoned to Harrison, whispering to him that the moment for dissolving Parliament had come. Disconcerted by the pace at which Cromwell was now travelling, Harrison replied that the work was very great and dangerous. "You say well," Cromwell answered, and relapsed into silence until the Speaker put the question for passing the Bill. "This is the time. I must do it," Cromwell said to Harrison. Rising, he spoke for some minutes about the care for the public good which the Parliament had shown, and then, by transitions which have not been recorded, charged them with having no heart for the public good, and with having espoused the corrupt interest of Presbytery and the lawyers. But the Lord had done with them, the Lord had chosen other instruments for the carrying on of His work.

This was strange language within the walls of Parliament, exclaimed Sir Peter Wentworth, and from a trusted servant, and one whom Parliament had so highly honoured.

Clapping his hat on his head and leaving his seat, Cromwell stamped up and down the floor of the House, crying: "You are no Parliament, I say you are no Parliament. Come, come, we have had enough of this. I will put an end to your prating. Call them in!"

A party of musketeers marched in.

"This is not honest," cried Vane. "Yea, it is against morality and common honesty."

"O Sir Henry Vane," roared Cromwell, "Sir Henry Vane, the Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane!"

"There sits a drunkard," he shouted, pointing at a member. "Some of you are whoremasters," glaring at Sir Peter Wentworth and Henry Marten.

Going to the table he picked up the mace. "What shall we do with this bauble? Here," to a musketeer, "take it away."

"Fetch him down," he called to Harrison, indicating Lenthall, the Speaker, who refused to move until Harrison, saying, "Sir, I will lend you my hand," reached up and helped him down.

"It is you that have forced me to this," Cromwell cried after the retreating members, "for I have sought the Lord day and night that He would rather slay me than put me on the doing of this work."

Snatching the Bill from the clerk of the House, he thrust it under his cloak, and ordering the House to be locked walked out, and back to Whitehall.

Later in the day, attended by Lambert and Harrison, he marched in on a meeting of the Council of State, and said that if they were there as private persons they would not be disturbed, but if as a Council of State they were to take notice that the Parliament was dissolved.

The hour of the religious millenarians, resolved to build Jerusalem in England's otherwise green and pleasant land, had now arrived; and under pressure from Harrison, who rejoiced that God had "made the General instrumental to put the power into the hands of His people contrary to own intentions," Cromwell convened the Parliament familiarly known as Barebones Parliament after one of its members, Mr Praisegod Barbone, a leather merchant in Fleet Street. Of the hundred and forty members

of the Little Parliament, as it was also called, some were men of wealth or of high military or naval rank, but the majority were zealots nominated by the "godly clergy," that is, the ministers of the various sects to which the extremists of the army belonged.

Cromwell's speech to the Little Parliament, summarised earlier, undoubtedly expressed a sincere if not very solid hope that this strange assembly would be guided to profitable issues by the Lord. But, while putting his trust in God, he continued to keep his powder dry. The Little Parliament met on July 4, 1653, and by the late autumn, in spite of his hint to it that there was a new Council of State which would attend to business, it had drawn up a programme, based on Mosaic principles, for a reformation of society in all its branches, church, law and property. On December 12, at an early hour of the day, a certain number of members, acting, in Carlyle's opinion, on their own initiative and without any pressure from Cromwell, hurried through a motion that "the sitting of this Parliament any longer, as now constituted, will not be for the good of the Commonwealth; and that therefore it is requisite to deliver up unto the Lord General Cromwell the Powers which we received from him." The motion having been carried without a debate, the Speaker immediately adjourned the House, and accompanied by forty members took the news of what had happened to Cromwell, who expressed great astonishment.

A few days later, Cromwell, at the request of his council of officers, accepted the title of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, and agreed to rule in accordance with a written constitution called the Instrument of Government. The new government was to consist of a single person, a Parliament of one house and a Council of State. Parliament was to sit for at least five months in every three years, a majority of the Council could disqualify any member from sitting, and Parliament was to assemble for the first time on September 3, 1654. Meanwhile, in the eight months before Parliament met, the Protector and his Council had the power to make ordinances having the force of law.

There was not much in these arrangements to please a keen Parliamentarian. September 3, the day of the assembling of Parliament, was the day on which Cromwell appeared before Drogheda and won Dunbar and Worcester, but past events had afforded no reason to suppose that Cromwell's lucky day was also Parliament's.

His speech to the new Parliament differed greatly from the one he had delivered fourteen months earlier to the zealots collected by Harrison and the godly clergy. The Barebones Parliament had frightened everyone with any position or money to safeguard, including most of the high

officers of the army. So far as the religious millenarians and their leader Harrison, who spent a good deal of the Protectorate in prison, were concerned, Cromwell and Parliament shared the same determination not to let them loose on society again. The House was therefore with him when he referred to "the Ranks and Orders of men, whereby England hath been known for hundreds of years. A nobleman, a gentleman, a yeoman—that is a good interest in the Nation, and a great one!" The Levelling principle, he continued, tended to the reducing of all to an equality—"a pleasing voice to all Poor Men, and truly not unwelcome to all Bad Men." As to the Fifth Monarchy, that was a notion he hoped that everyone honoured and waited the fulfilment of, and when more fulness of the Spirit was poured forth to subdue iniquity, then would the approach of that glory be. But for men, on this principle, to betitle themselves to govern nations and give laws to people, and determine of property and liberty, truly they had need to give clear manifestations of God's presence with them, before wise men would receive or submit to their conclusions.

From this repudiation of his last Parliament he passed to a review of the work done by the present government at home and abroad in the previous eight months, and concluded: "I have not spoken these things as one who assumes to himself dominion over you; but as one who doth resolve to be a fellow-servant with you. . . . I shall trouble you no longer; but desire you to repair to your House, and to exercise your own liberty in the choice of a Speaker, that so you may lose no time in carrying on your work."

Having reinstated Lenthall in the chair from which Harrison had helped him down, the House proceeded to debate the Instrument of Government, the motion being whether the House should approve of government by a Single Person and a Parliament. One morning, coming to the House to continue the debate, members found it guarded by soldiers, and were told to go to the Painted Chamber in Whitehall, where the Protector would meet them.

To the assembled members, in a long and passionately reproachful speech, Cromwell pointed out that though they were, as he had told them, a free Parliament, their freedom did not extend to questioning the constitution from which alone their authority derived. Rather would he be rolled into his grave and buried with infamy than allow the wilful throwing away of the Government. Therefore, until they had signed a promise to adhere to the Instrument of Government, the House would not be open to them. The place where they could go and sign was in the lobby outside the Parliament door.

About three hundred out of four hundred and sixty members having signed, the House reassembled and at once renewed the debate on the Instrument of Government. From the standpoint of Parliament the Civil War had been fought to make secure the Parliamentary rights won in the first year of the Long Parliament, not to replace a bungling autocrat with a masterful one. Once towards the close of his life Cromwell compared himself to a constable set to keep the peace of the parish. With this notion of his functions none of his Parliaments would have quarrelled, had he on his side recognised that a bench of magistrates does not care to hold its powers at the discretion of the parish constable. Cromwell refusing to recognise this, a peaceful relation between him and his Parliaments was unattainable. In the revived debate on the Instrument, however, Parliament, not wishing to be locked out again, was so far conciliatory as to approve the constitution which Cromwell had told them they were not entitled to discuss. This over, they passed to matters where they could assert the authority of Parliament with, as they hoped, less risk of drawing the Protector's fire, modifying the ordinances of the Council, persecuting sectaries and withholding supplies for the services of the Government. Having endured in silence for four months, Cromwell sent for them again. Instead of peace and settlement, he said, weeds and nettles, briars and thorns had thriven under their shadow. The army was mutinous owing to their pay being withheld, Levellers and Cavaliers were coming together in their conspiracies, and it was not for the profit of the nation that they should sit any longer—"And therefore I do declare unto you, that I do dissolve this Parliament."

## 13

The troubles on the circumference of his rule never spread to any dangerous extent to the core, where Cromwell managed his military and civil advisers with extraordinary skill. The general unattractiveness of the Puritans, in appearance, mannerisms and language, makes it difficult to associate the idea of charm with their leader. Yet Andrew Marvell, who knew him well and was not a flatterer, spoke of Cromwell's powerful charm, and even of the "piercing sweetness" of his eyes. To enlarge and then to limit a great revolution would not have been possible to Cromwell unless he had possessed in the highest degree the fascination which enables a man to infect others with the belief that in the realising of his desires they will find the satisfaction of their own, a fascination, however, which needs to be nourished by success, and fades quickly in misfortune. The devotion accorded to Charles I, who had the double

advantage of being beneath envy as a man and above rivalry as a king, was completely unattainable by Cromwell, whose days were spent in cajoling one man, menacing another and bribing a third, a wearying round from which, like Caliban dreaming of heaven or listening to the sweet airs of his island, he sometimes longed to escape into a richer life. When his efficient but arid colleagues, Whitelocke, his legal adviser, and Thurloe, his secretary and the organiser of his secret service, oppressed him too much, he would, Whitelocke narrates, "be very cheerful, and laying aside his greatness would be exceedingly familiar, and by way of diversion would make verses with them, and every one must try his fancy"—not much of a diversion perhaps, at any rate for Whitelocke and Thurloe, yet a sign of something human in Cromwell struggling to express itself.

He was not petty nor vindictive, and was always ready to make a quarrel up, from good nature as well as policy. But neither his good nature nor whatever of confused aspiration struggled deep within him could hold its ground in any conflict with his interests. The Quakers, who carried sectarianism to the fantastic length of trying to live in accordance with the teaching of Christ, were harried with increasing severity during the Protectorate, many of them, including their great founder George Fox, serving terms of imprisonment. In 1654, shortly after the movement began, Fox had a long talk with Cromwell. "Many more words I had with him," Fox writes, "but people coming in, I drew a little back; and as I was turning he caught me by the hand, and with tears in his eyes said, 'Come again to my house, for if thou and I were but an hour a day together, we should be nearer one another. I wish no more harm to thee than to my own soul.'" Two years later, the Quakers having in the interval suffered greatly at the hands of officialdom, from country justices up to Thurloe, Fox visited Cromwell again. "The power of the Lord God arose in me," he writes, "and I was moved in it to bid him lay down his crown at the feet of Jesus. Several times I spake to him to the same effect. Now I was standing by the table and he came and sat upon the table's side by me, and said he would be as high as I was; and so continued speaking against the light of Christ Jesus; and went away in a light manner."

## 14

To form a confederation of the Protestant powers and renew the Thirty Years War floated as a realisable dream before Cromwell during his Protectorate, nor would he ever reconcile himself to the fact that the eighty years from the Massacre of St Bartholomew to the massacres of

Drogheda and Wexford had for the time being exhausted religion as a motive for bloodshed on a grand scale.

As a first step towards this confederation, Cromwell made peace with the Dutch, and finding he had now one hundred and sixty well-equipped ships at his disposal, he discussed with his Council whether he should use them against France or Spain, between which Catholic countries a war was in progress. Finally, towards the close of 1654, he sent an expedition to the West Indies to capture San Domingo, and another, under Blake, to the Mediterranean. The attack on San Domingo failed, and though Jamaica was taken and later colonised, Cromwell's attempts to persuade the Puritans of New England to move there in a body do not support the view that he had a prevision either of what the British Empire is or of what, but for Thomas Paine and George Washington, it might have been. The genius of Blake secured far different results for his expedition, which gave England for the first time the control of the Mediterranean, and completed the effect produced on Cardinal Mazarin's mind by Cromwell's conquest of the British Isles. From 1655 till Cromwell's death Mazarin was unremitting in his attentions to the master of the finest troops and the best navy in the world, first securing Cromwell's friendly neutrality and then his armed support in the conflict which ended with replacing Spain by France as the first power in Europe. There is a tradition that in the last year of his life Cromwell, uneasy at the situation he had helped to create, was preparing to ally himself with Spain. Although, in the words of his enemy Clarendon, Cromwell's greatness at home was but a shadow of his glory abroad, his dream of a Protestant League blurred his judgment in his dealings with Mazarin. It was not his intention to slide into an alliance with France. In 1655 he told the agent of the Elector of Brandenburg that he had been called by God not only to rule over the English Republic but also to introduce union and friendship among the princes of Europe. His hope was to unite Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Brandenburg in a league for the overthrow of the Austrian emperor, the Pope and Spain; but as the Dutch distrusted Cromwell, and a sudden invasion of Poland by the Swedish king started violent dissensions between Sweden, Denmark and Brandenburg, nothing came of this design. So, for want of a more suitable ally against Catholicism, he had to fall back upon Cardinal Mazarin, who in return for Cromwell's help against the Spanish ceded him Dunkirk, to the alarm of the Dutch.

The only service Cromwell was able to perform for the Protestants on the Continent was when, at his request, Cardinal Mazarin persuaded the Duke of Savoy to desist from massacring the Protestants in the valleys of Piedmont. The Lord Protector, Carlyle says, was melted into tears, and

roused into sacred fire, but as his officials in Ireland revenged the Piedmontese massacres on the native Irish, the sum of human suffering remained on balance the same.

## 15

The conspiracies against his rule and the plots against his life to which Cromwell referred when dissolving the first Parliament of his Protectorate were the natural result of the semi-royal rank he had assumed. The Cavaliers wanted to remove him before he founded a new dynasty, and the democrats and religious enthusiasts wanted to destroy the man who had, as they thought, betrayed their hopes, even the restoration of the Stuarts seeming to them preferable to the continuance of Cromwell, as is shown by a letter the Anabaptists sent to the future Charles II: "We know not, we know not, whether we have juster matter of shame or sorrow administered to us when wee take a reflex view of our past actions, and consider into the commission of what crimes, impieties, wickednesses, and unheard of villainies, we have been led, cheated, cozened, and betrayed, by that grand impostor, that loathsome hypocrite, that detestable traitor, that prodigy of nature, that *opprobrium* of mankind, that landscape of iniquity, that sink of sin, and that compendium of baseness, who now calls himself our Protector."

In order to root up conspiracies, and perhaps also to keep his generals busy and out of London, Cromwell placed England under martial law in the summer of 1655, dividing the country into twelve districts, each under the control of a major-general. To raise money for the Spanish war and for the police forces of the military governors, and also to hamper insurrections, Cavalier squires were heavily taxed—a measure which, when the Rump had recourse to it during the Dutch war, had moved Cromwell to indignant pity. Race-meetings, cock-fights and bear-baitings were prohibited, and unnecessary ale-houses suppressed, the judge of their necessity being the local major-general, who was actuated as much by an objection to people enjoying themselves as by the need to take precautions against conspirators meeting. "They are desperate persons," the major-general in Shropshire wrote of some country gentlemen who had gone hunting when summoned to appear before one of his officers, "and divers of them fit to grind sugar-cane or plant tobacco, and if some of them were sent into the Indies, it would do much good."

After a year of the major-generals, Cromwell decided to summon another Parliament. In spite of the universal dislike now felt against the generals, Cromwell's power still depended on them, he was as dubious as ever of Parliament, and having, assisted by his generals, examined a list of

the new members, he suspended nearly a hundred, in accordance with the Instrument of Government. Certificates allowing approved members to enter the House were issued, and the rest were turned back by a guard of soldiers.

Once again winnowing and sifting proved useless. Having thrown out a Bill designed to continue the arbitrary powers of the major-generals, Parliament, early in 1657, presented Cromwell with a Humble Petition and Advice, proposing a new government in which the chief magistrate should take the title of king, and Parliament consist of two Houses. With the national system thus restored to its shape before the Civil War, Parliament hoped that Cromwell would be transformed from an illegal fact into a legal fiction, while Cromwell, on his side, was willing to accept the limited prerogatives of a king, partly no doubt in the knowledge that he could stretch them if necessary, and partly because he was growing tired and was ready to try anything which might compose the nation and put an end to the increasingly desperate plots against his life. To the title itself he expressed the contemptuous indifference proper in a republican and a Puritan; but that he had a taste for the ornaments and ceremonies of the world, and that this taste expanded with his increasing power, appears in his splendid departure for the Irish war, and still more plainly in the funeral he gave his mother in Westminster Abbey, although the poor old woman, transplanted to Whitehall at the age of ninety as a kind of Queen-Dowager, had asked to be taken home when she was dead.

The generals were enraged at the idea of Cromwell as king, and suspected, plausibly enough, that the Humble Petition and Advice had not come to him as a surprise. Supported by Desborough, Cromwell's brother-in-law, and by Fleetwood, his son-in-law, Lambert warned Cromwell not to accept the crown. Cromwell mistrusted Lambert, who was opposing his understanding with France and wanted an alliance with Spain, and who was also, being personally likeable, a favourite with the many soldiers for whom the pocket Bible issued to the troops was a part of their equipment they would willingly have laid aside. For some weeks Cromwell held out against his generals, but on the day when the House was expecting his assent to the Humble Petition, Colonel Pride, accompanied by twenty-six officers, entered the Commons and presented a Remonstrance against the kingship at the bar of the House—a high breach of Parliamentary privilege, Cromwell exclaimed when the news reached him. Perhaps feeling that Parliamentary privilege was not his subject, he broke off abruptly, and summoning the House to Whitehall addressed them in a comparatively short speech, ending: "I cannot

undertake this Government with the Title of King. And that is mine Answer to this great and weighty Business."

In spite of this hitch, the conversion of the Protectorate into a constitutional monarchy in all but name went on, and on June 26, 1657, there was a coronation from which nothing was missing but a crown. Under a canopy at the upper end of Westminster Hall was placed the royal coronation chair, on a table lay a large Bible and the sword and sceptre of the Commonwealth. To the blasts of trumpets Cromwell, having been invested by the Speaker with a mantle of purple lined with ermine, and girt with the sword, took the sceptre in his right hand, and seated himself on the royal chair, the ambassador of Louis XIV on one side and the ambassador of the United Provinces on the other.

Since Cromwell had been given the right to appoint his successor, it must have seemed to that large if vague section of the public usually referred to as "moderate men of all shades of opinion" that it now remained only to re-establish the House of Lords, and then everyone could sink back with a sigh of relief, leaving the title of king to be restored at a more convenient season. But when Parliament, which had prorogued itself for six months, met again at the beginning of 1658, it at once began to quarrel with Cromwell about his composition of the Other House, as the House of Lords was provisionally called. Only one of the few peers invited by Cromwell to become members had taken his seat. On the other hand, as Cromwell had to keep in with the army, there was a good sprinkling of generals and colonels, including Colonel Pride, whom the Commons had no reason to like, and Colonel Hewson, the most savage of the regicides. It seemed to the Commons that Cromwell was not making a clean start as a constitutional monarch.

One morning, about a fortnight after the session opened, Cromwell hurried down to Westminster. As he was drinking a cup of ale and eating a piece of toast in one of the withdrawing-rooms, Fleetwood came in and begged him to proceed with caution. "You are a milksop," Cromwell roared. "By the living God, I will dissolve the House."

The Commons having, at a summons from Cromwell, assembled in the House of Lords, he burst out that there was not a man living could say he had sought his present position, no, not a man nor woman treading upon English ground. "I would have been glad to have lived under my woodside, to have kept a flock of sheep, rather than undertake such a Government as this. But undertaking it by the Advice and Petition of you, I did look that you who had offered it unto me should make it good." It had, he went on, been granted to him that he should name another House—at this point he became rather incoherently reproachful.

Emerging into lucidity again, he cried out that they had disjointed the whole Nation through their intention to devise a Commonwealth again. Some of them were stirring up the City, some were endeavouring to pervert the army, some, by commission from Charles Stuart, were drawing up lists of persons to join in any insurrection that might be made. "And if this be the end of your sitting, and this be your carriage, I think it high time that an end be put to your sitting. And I do dissolve this Parliament. And let God be judge between you and me!"

## 16

Where, amid the welter of outraged Presbyterian M.P.s and plotting Cavaliers and Anabaptists, to find sound material for his next Parliament puzzled Cromwell, and for the time being he handed the problem over to a committee of his colleagues. In the spring of 1658 he sent six thousand men to help the French in their siege of Dunkirk, and the annihilation of the Spaniards by his Ironsides some weeks later must have roused his heart for a moment, but his strength was failing and private sorrows were draining it still further. In February his youngest daughter lost her husband, soon afterwards the little boy of his favourite daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, died, and then Elizabeth herself fell ill. She was in great pain, which sometimes swelled into convulsions of agony, and day after day, during the last four weeks of her life, her father sat by her bed, refusing to leave her. The prosperity of himself and those he loved had been his one test of God's favour, and now it must have seemed to him that God, whose goodness had abounded so exceedingly towards him in the mercies of so many sacked strongholds and bloody fields, had rejected him at last. Elizabeth died on August 6. A few days later he called for a Bible, and asked a friend to read out a passage from the Epistle to the Philippians. His friend, having read, he said: "This Scripture did once save my life, when my eldest son died, which went as a dagger to my heart, indeed it did!"; then murmured half to himself: "It's true, Paul, you have learned this, and attained to this measure of grace. But what shall I do? Ah, poor creature, it is a hard lesson for me to take out! I find it so!" Reading on, he came to the verse "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," and in a more confident voice exclaimed: "He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too!"

One day in the third week of August, feeling stronger, he went for a ride in the park of Hampton Court, where George Fox, who had gone down to intercede for the Quakers, saw him at the head of his lifeguard.

"I felt a whiff of death go forth against him," Fox wrote; "and when I came to him, he looked like a dead man."

The next day he relapsed, and grew rapidly worse, worn out by alternations of hot and cold shivering fits. Feeling that death was near, he sent for his wife and children, and said to them: "Love not this world. I say unto you, it is not good that you should love this world." During his wakeful nights he spoke often to himself, sometimes in hope, sometimes in terror, once crying out, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and then repeating the words twice very vehemently. In calmer moments he would murmur that God was good, indeed He was, and would not leave him. "Tell me," he asked one of his chaplains, "is it possible to fall from grace?" and when the chaplain replied that it was not, he said: "Then I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace."

On the evening of September 2, Thurloe, who had tried several times to ascertain Cromwell's successor, came in with a colleague, and when he mentioned Richard's name, Cromwell gave an assenting nod. He was very restless throughout the night, and in the early morning of September 3 when his attendant asked him to drink something, so that he might sleep, he cried: "It is not my design to drink or sleep, but my design is to make what haste I can to be gone." It was his lucky day, and perhaps the meaning of his cry was that he must avail himself of whatever might help him as he rode out to a more doubtful encounter than in the narrow streets of Worcester or between the sea and hills outside Dunbar.

## Napoleon

### I

CORSICA's struggle for independence against Genoa in the fifties and sixties of the eighteenth century stirred the whole Continent, and it is therefore a mistake to regard as an example of uncanny prescience Rousseau's presentiment that that island would some day astonish Europe. Boswell was not the man to water the first shoots of achievement, and it was with no sense of anticlimax that he added Paoli, the Corsican leader, to the bag which already included Johnson, Rousseau and Voltaire. Frederick the Great sent Paoli a sword of honour, inscribed *Patria Potestas*, Alfieri dedicated a tragedy to him, and Dr Tissot, a famous Swiss physician, ranked him with Cæsar, Mahomet and Cromwell among men of superhuman powers. So, in expecting something astonishing from Corsica, Rousseau was no more inspired than the many persons who in 1917 looked upon Russia as a future scene of singular and beneficial happenings.

It was not only the heroism but also the wildness of the Corsicans which appealed to Europe. The sufferings inflicted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the name of God had turned men from looking upwards for salvation to looking at each other, and, getting little encouragement from this, they invented a Natural Man, a denizen of the waste places of the earth, uncorrupted by luxury and ideas, born free, like themselves, but not, as they were, in chains. To Boswell, heir of a large estate, and to Rousseau, the guest of anyone willing to be his host, the Corsican peasant embodied all the virtues attributed to the Natural Man. Some of these virtues were certainly his. A small people, oppressed during many centuries by more powerful neighbours, the Corsicans were hardy and courageous, frugal and untainted by culture, and would have conformed in all particulars with Rousseau's view of them, had Rousseau been right in supposing that corruption is created by external circumstances. As it was, the longing of the human spirit for a satisfaction unattainable in this life easily transformed itself with the Corsicans, as with the Jews of the Old Testament, into a morbid appetite for the power they had never possessed.

Napoleon was born into this forcing-house of the acquisitive and rapacious instincts on August 15, 1769, fifteen months after Genoa, abandoning her attempts to subdue Corsica, had sold it to France. In the

months before his birth his mother, Letizia Bonaparte, accompanied her husband Carlo, who was fighting with Paoli against the new masters of the island. The campaign ended in the decisive defeat of Paoli, who escaped with some hundreds of his followers, and took refuge in England. Carlo, however, remained in Corsica, and was soon on good terms with the French.

When Napoleon was nine, his father sent him and his elder brother Joseph to school in Autun. It was the first time the two small Corsicans had been in France, and when a little later Napoleon left for the military college at Brienne, Joseph wept many tears, Napoleon, more self-contained or less moved, only one. The six years he spent at Brienne were a hard and unhappy time. French was a strange tongue to him, and the other boys jeered at his accent and made fun of his hero, Paoli. Being of Italian descent, Napoleon considered himself superior to the native Corsicans, and so was doubly humiliated at being treated as a member of a conquered race. But at this time he still loved Corsica, and was homesick for its hills and warm bays, which he dreamed of helping to free from the French in some future campaign, waged by Paoli, whom he adored as the man that had shown the world how great a Corsican could be. He read incessantly at Brienne, chiefly history and geography. Plutarch was his favourite book, and having already a passion for maps, he studied in detail the Eastern lands which Alexander the Great traversed as a conqueror.

At sixteen he went to La Fère as a second lieutenant in the artillery. The French artillery, he said later, was the best in Europe, and the corps at La Fère like a family, the senior officers the bravest and most worthy men in the world, though too old, because the peace had been too prolonged. Corsica, however, still occupied his thoughts, and he lamented in one of the notebooks he was now beginning to fill with reflections that he was obliged by duty to praise men whom virtue should make him hate—"When the fatherland is no more, a good patriot should die."

He returned to Corsica when he was seventeen on a year's leave. His father was dead, and Lucien and Elisa in France, but the rest of the family was there to welcome him, including two sisters and a brother all born since he was last at home. They admired instead of laughing at his French, and were proud of the uniform which he had hitherto been half ashamed to wear. It was a period of something as near happiness as he ever knew, endless leisure for reading, long walks in which he yielded himself to what, in the spirit of Rousseau, he called "the sweetness, the melancholy, the emotion that usually arises in such conditions," and pleasant hours on the terrace of his home declaiming Racine and Corneille with Joseph. "Ah," said Joseph many years later, "the glorious Emperor

will never indemnify me for the loss of that Napoleon whom I loved so dearly, whom I should like to see again as I knew him in 1786, if one can meet again in the Elysian fields."

2

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, Corsica, as a breeding-ground of liberty, came in for some compliments, Mirabeau proposing in the National Assembly that Paoli and other Corsicans who had fought for their independence should be permitted to return to the island, and there enjoy French rights—that is, be acknowledged as citizens of the country they had tried to repel from their soil. Anxious to get back to Corsica, Paoli fell in with this proposal, was received by the National Assembly, and appeared by the side of La Fayette at a great review in the Champ de Mars.

Joseph and Napoleon meanwhile were stirring up revolutionary feeling in Ajaccio, to the displeasure of Paoli, who desired only to make Corsica independent and cared neither for the old nor the new order in France. He could not help being struck by Napoleon, of whom for some time he saw a great deal, but he was no doubt relieved when Napoleon, who as an officer in the French army had to be with his regiment occasionally, went back to France. Once more with his regiment, Napoleon set to work on a history of Corsica. Paoli had some documents he needed, but when he asked for them Paoli replied that he was too busy to look for them, and gave the same answer in a more emphatic tone when Joseph repeated Napoleon's request. Napoleon, however, did not allow himself to be checked by Paoli's coldness, he continued to regard Corsica as the scene of his future career, and in September 1791 returned there to join with Joseph in advancing the interest of the Bonapartes.

Joseph wished to become a member of the Legislative Assembly, and Napoleon was resolved to be elected a lieutenant-colonel of the Corsican Volunteers. Paoli would not allow Joseph's name even to be proposed, but Napoleon, excited by a growing consciousness of his powers and fearing lest he might have at last exhausted the patience of the French military authorities with his liberal indulgence in leave, meant to make sure of his election as lieutenant-colonel. His methods, which included kidnapping, armed intimidation and an unsanctioned use of Paoli's name, were successful, but his election was followed by riots in Ajaccio. As so often in his later life, he preferred to drop an enterprise which was becoming troublesome rather than attempt to consolidate it, but Paoli would not fall in with his suggestion that he should be appointed the commanding-officer of the Volunteers which were being raised in the

interior. Few people would have tried Paoli's patience any further, but Napoleon went on to propose that his younger brother Lucien, who was still in his teens, should become Paoli's secretary. Paoli having declined this suggestion too, Napoleon decided to leave Corsica for the time being, and go to Paris, where he hoped to persuade the authorities to restore his commission, of which he had recently been relieved.

## 3

Shortly after reaching Paris, Napoleon witnessed the attack of the mob on the Tuileries when the king was forced to put on a red cap, and the second attack a few weeks later, when the Swiss Guard was massacred. Almost penniless, discredited in Corsica and cashiered in France, he felt that disgust at human nature and contempt for its fits of delirium which are apt to overwhelm men of enormous energy and little interior richness when they themselves are powerless to exploit the passions they despise. This mood soon passed, for the extremists of the Revolution needed all the officers who would serve them. Napoleon was reinstated in the service, raised to the rank of captain, and returning to Corsica as an ardent Jacobite, for whom the interests of Corsica were now identified with those of France, tried to displace Paoli. The attempt was a complete failure, and Napoleon and his family, banished by popular decree, sailed for France.

He was now able to concentrate on France as the instrument of his ambition; but it is too late in the middle twenties to take fast root in a country. Cromwell, Frederick the Great and Peter of Russia all drew from their native soil a solidity which enabled them to keep their ambitions within reasonable bounds and to die, however miserably, at home. Napoleon, who hated France throughout his most impressionable years, and was so unattached in his desires as at one time to consider taking a commission in the East India Company, with a vague idea of turning the English out of India and founding an Eastern empire, was predestined to a wild and random course, ending in exile or a violent death.

The year 1793 was a full one for the Revolutionary Government, which was not only at war with Austria, Prussia, Holland, England and Spain, but had also to cope with internal revolts in the west and the south. While engaged in reorganising the artillery at Avignon, Napoleon wrote a pamphlet, *Le Souper de Beaucaire*, in which he set forth the case for the Jacobin Government. This he showed to the younger Robespierre, who was on his way to the siege of Marseilles, and when Toulon revolted Robespierre sent Napoleon there in command of a battery. In

the previous months Napoleon had traversed the whole of the southern coast, he knew where all the heavy guns were, and now sent for them; and it was probably at his suggestion that the promontory commanding the inner and outer harbours was seized, and the recapture of Toulon effected. The fall of Toulon was celebrated at Paris by a popular festival, Napoleon became a brigadier-general, and, having appointed as his adjutants Marmont and Junot, two of his future generals, set to work to fortify the coast from Toulon to Genoa. The campaign of Italy was already in his mind, and he repeatedly urged it on the younger Robespierre, but his plans were checked and his own life for a time endangered by the downfall of the two Robespierres. Arrested and put into prison, he wrote to a political acquaintance in Paris, dissociating himself from whatever complicity in the designs of the Robespierres he might be accused of. "I am," he wrote, "somewhat affected by the death of the younger Robespierre, for I loved the man and believed him sincere, yet had he been my own father I would have stabbed him, had he wished to become a tyrant." Whether because of this letter, which suggested a simple soldier unversed in human corruption, or because there was no evidence to connect Napoleon with the Robespierres except in his military capacity, he was released. Once more out of work, he passed some wretched months, during which he tried without success to set up as a bookseller, and consoled his spare hours with *The Sorrows of Werther* and the vague vast dreams of Ossian, who, whether invented by James Macpherson or furbished up out of old Gaelic legends, answered the desire of the age for something even more unnatural than the Natural Man.

In his unhappiness he fell passionately in love with a young girl, Eugénie-Désirée Clary, whose elder sister had recently married Joseph Bonaparte; and in the early autumn of the following year, 1795, he wrote a short story, *Clisson and Eugénie*, which reveals, if not what he was, at least what in certain moods he wished to believe himself. There are romances written by men of action in the days of their obscurity, which relieve the reader from the depressing thought that their later lives marked a great declension from the dreams of their youth. But in Napoleon there was something which needed other nourishment than the fare of ordinary desires, though it was too weak and quickly overlaid to find what it needed.

Eugénie, Napoleon writes in his story, could only please the ardent man who does not love from inclination or gallantry, but with the passion of a strong emotion. Napoleon was not at his ease with women, who were repelled by his self-absorption and gloomy disinclination to

make them feel of some importance to members of the opposite sex. Aware of his chilling effect, he put it in a favourable light when describing Clisson, who is intended for himself: "His fiery imagination and flaming heart, his strict logic and cold spirit, were merely wearied by the advances of coquettes, the games of gallantry, the logic of idlers, and the morals of fools. He did not understand the intrigues and paid no attention to the witty remarks." Born for war, Clisson studies the principles of military art while the young men of his own age are pursuing girls. He rises rapidly in the army, but, disgusted by the envy and calumny aroused by his success, withdraws into himself. "Like all men, he wanted happiness and as yet had found only glory." Nature consoles him for men, he wanders at night by the banks of rivers, and cannot tear himself away from the sweet spectacle of fields bathed in the light of the moon.

The conclusion of the story reflects Napoleon's despair when he realised at last that Eugénie did not intend to marry him, and also forecasts the infidelity of Josephine when he was on his Italian campaign. Clisson, who is passing from victory to victory, sends a friend to Eugénie to tell her that he has been wounded. Eugénie falls in love with the friend, and Clisson hurls himself into battle, and dies pierced with a thousand wounds.

The original Eugénie was fond enough of Napoleon to write him affectionate letters when, once more an officer, he returned to Paris in the spring of 1795, but when he was yet again discharged she ceased to correspond with him. Joseph Bonaparte had gone with her and her sister to Genoa to get away from a fresh outbreak of riots in Marseilles, and when Eugénie did not answer the letters Napoleon sent to Genoa, he tried to touch her through Joseph, to whom he wrote several times, making artless attempts to move or pique Eugénie. Paris, he said, provided everything for a pleasant and amusing life, women were everywhere, in the theatres, boulevards and libraries, and the men only lived for them and because of them. . . . He felt little attachment to life, and regarded it without much affection, death put an end to everything, it was madness to take things too seriously, and he would probably end by not getting out of the way when a carriage approached. . . . He was continually worrying the Committee of Public Safety for a job, and if he got one might be seized with the madness of marrying—"I should like you to say something of this in the right quarter. Let me know the result. I am mad enough to want a home. My affair with Eugénie must either come to a satisfactory conclusion or be broken off. I impatiently await a reply."

There was no answer to this appeal for some weeks, during which Napoleon wrote his story, and when the reply came it broke off all rela-

tions between him and Eugénie. This was in the September of 1795. In the first week of October the Convention, in a panic over the imminent revolt of Paris against their rule, gave Napoleon the chance he had been looking for; he brought up guns from the suburbs, and in a few hours stamped out the revolt, killing about a hundred of the insurgents. At two in the morning, when all was quiet, he sat down and wrote to Joseph: "Happiness has come to me. . . . My love to Eugénie."

4

In the middle of the following year, 1796, the *Times* reported that on the side of Italy an uninterrupted series of successes continued to crown the efforts of the French Republicans. They subdued nations, checked rebels, violated the neutrality of feeble powers, pillaged churches, professed respect for religious worship and pursued the shattered remnant of the Imperial army. A fortnight later, the *Times*, recovering the optimism which has always been its most marked quality, announced that General Bonaparte had removed his headquarters to Tortona, a retrograde movement of more than a hundred miles, from which the *Times* inferred that the French did not dare to advance further on the side of Italy. This was in July. In December the *Times* questioned whether the victory of Arcola were so decisive as General Bonaparte claimed, and in January it reported that dissensions had broken out in the army of Italy, there was a revolt among the generals, and "thus then terminates the rapid and brilliant campaign of that famous Corsican." A little later, Mantua fell, the Pope signed a dictated peace, Venice collapsed, and in October 1797, a week or two after the physicians of General Bonaparte had, according to the *Times*, declared the most perfect repose to be the only remedy for restoring his former vigour, Napoleon forced upon Austria the Treaty of Campo-Formio, by which Austria ceded Belgium and the Rhine frontier to France and acknowledged the Cisalpine Republic. In return for these concessions Napoleon handed Venice over to Austria, after first, in contravention of the treaty, removing the cannon and stores in the Venetian arsenals, the bronze horses in front of St Mark, and the chief masterpieces of Titian and Tintoretto.

The Italian campaign satisfied no one except Napoleon and his army. In eighteen months he had become the most talked-of man in Europe, he had concluded treaties and created states without consulting the Directors in Paris, and he had opened out before his soldiers an endless prospect of conquest. Earlier generals, Hoche, Pichegru and Moreau, had served the Republic, but Napoleon served only himself, and therefore, in the

general waning of enthusiasm for the Revolution, attracted the support of all the active young officers for whom the break-up of the old system meant nothing more Utopian than an unrestricted pursuit of glory and position. Among his gifts the most transcendent was the power to focus the attention of the world upon himself. It was for this purpose that he sent the art treasures of Italy to Paris, whose citizens as they wandered through the Louvre received from the visions of Renaissance painters a comforting if hazy impression that after the lean and terrifying years of the Revolution better things were in store for them, now that young Bonaparte was busy on their behalf. Turning the Louvre into an advertisement for Bonaparte did not please the Directors, but the plunder he was sending them from the Cisalpine Republic reconciled them to it. Formed by Napoleon out of Lombardy and fragments of Switzerland and Venetia, the Cisalpine Republic had at first been enthusiastic for their liberator, but it was not long before they realised what kind of freedom he was inflicting on them. "Respect for property, humanity and religion," he told them, "—this is our animating principle. But you owe us, who are your brothers, a fair return. . . . Lombardy must support us with all her resources. We need provisions. . . . We are entitled to them by right of conquest. Friendship must hasten to offer them to us. We have to requisition twenty million francs from the provinces. They are so rich that this will not be a serious burden."

## 5

The opposition between happiness and glory which he felt while writing *Clisson and Eugénie* still existed for Napoleon during his Italian campaign. Before setting out he had married Josephine de Beauharnais, the widow of a French nobleman and a mistress of Barras, the Director responsible for Napoleon's appointment to the Italian command. Napoleon adored Josephine for her grace, charm and love of life, but Josephine was not attracted to the small, shabby, embarrassingly intense Napoleon, her taste being for easy-mannered, socially adaptable young men. No doubt Barras assured her that whatever Napoleon looked like, he was cut out for success, and she married him two days after his appointment. On reaching his army, he surprised his generals by showing them the portrait of his bride, but when he suddenly switched over to the task before them they as quickly dropped the notion that they were going to have an easy life under Barras's nominee.

The knowledge that Josephine did not love him, and his ceaseless and well-founded fear that she was being unfaithful, tormented him throughout the campaign. He wrote to her incessantly, begging her to join him,

but she preferred Paris, where she was enjoying a triumph as Napoleon's wife. In the middle of a business letter to Carnot, the Minister of War, Napoleon broke out: "I am in despair. My wife won't come here. I am sure she must have a lover, and that that is what keeps her in Paris. I loathe women, one and all!" To check his importunity, she told him she was with child. "I have been pestering you with complaints," he replied, "and you are ill. Love has robbed me of reason. . . . My life is an unending dream, gloomy forebodings make it hard for me to breathe, I have lost all hope. Write me ten pages, for nothing else can console me. You are ill, you love me, you are with child, and I never see you. . . . If I could only spend a whole day with you! You know, if I saw a lover with you, I should instantly tear the man to pieces." On the same day he wrote to Joseph: "Write to me, I implore you. Since early childhood we have been bound together by kinship and affection. Do for her what I would so eagerly do for you. . . . As soon as she is well again, she must come to me. I must have her in my arms, I love her to distraction, and cannot live without her. If she no longer loves me, there is nothing more for me in the world. Oh, do not keep the courier more than six hours in Paris, send him back to me with an answer which will give me new life. Be happy! For myself, nature has doomed me to win nothing but outward victories."

His suffering over Josephine lasted for another two years, reaching its culmination when he heard while in Egypt that she had taken a lover to live with her at Malmaison. "I would give everything in the world," he cried, "if only Junot's news were false." Once again he turned to Joseph: "I have no one left in the world but you. Your affection is precious to me. Only one thing could increase my bitterness, if I were to lose you, if you also were to prove a traitor. . . . At twenty-nine years of age, I find that fame is vanity. I've got to the end of everything. Only one resource is left to me, to become a complete egotist."

He forgave Josephine, but he did not forgive life, henceforth to be treated by him as a swindle which could only be endured by those who were operating it. A great dreariness exhales from him after Egypt, the cloudy poetry of his youth condensing into the worldly wisdom and spiritual imbecility of such sayings as—"Power is never ridiculous."—"Love is the occupation of the idle man, the distraction of the warrior, the stumbling-block of the sovereign."—"Heart! What is your heart? A bit of you crossed by a big vein in which the blood goes quicker as you run."—"Religion is an important element in a public institution for the education of young ladies. Let them be brought up to believe, and not to reason."

Unless modified by a great deal of reflection, a man's feeling about human beings in general echoes his feeling about himself in particular. After long and close observation of Napoleon in his later years, Metternich applied to him what Montaigne wrote of Guicciardini: "I have also observed this in him, that of so many souls and so many effects, so many motives and so many counsels as he judges, he never attributes any one to virtue, religion or conscience, as if all these were utterly extinct in the world: and of all the actions, how brave soever in outward show they appear in themselves, he always refers the cause and motive to some vicious occasion or some prospect of profit."

## 6

Napoleon set out for Egypt in the spring of 1798. England was the only menace left after the Treaty of Campo-Formio, and Napoleon argued that a campaign in Egypt would divert English naval forces from the defence of the island, and if successful would be a step towards the conquest of India and the destruction of England's overseas trade. Napoleon was an adept in rationalising what was essentially irrational. Had he been bent on destroying England, he would have concentrated all his energies on creating an effective fleet. The East drew him for the child-like reason that there were more and more picturesque-looking people there than in Europe. "I do not wish to remain here," he said on returning to Paris from Italy. "There is nothing to do. . . . This little Europe is too small a field. Great celebrity can be won only in the East." His idea of great celebrity appears in his confession, some years later, that he had hoped to ride into Asia on an elephant, wearing a turban and holding in his hand a Koran containing his own message.

What he expected to achieve in Egypt no one has been able to explain. As the English had the command of the sea, it was certain that his army would be cut off, and when this certainty had realised itself he did not mend matters by marching into Palestine and failing to capture Acre, which was held by Sir Sidney Smith and provisioned by the English fleet. In later years he was accustomed to say that Sidney Smith had stood between him and his destiny, and as this saying has impressed innumerable persons it would be unkind to scrutinise it with much care.

Napoleon escaped from Egypt by night, leaving his army to shift for itself under Kléber, who learnt of his appointment only after Napoleon had already set sail. With Napoleon went the antiquarians whom he had brought from France to give tone to his campaign, and whose archæo-

logical researches during their stay in Egypt have been entered on the credit side of the expedition by those who hold that the present is in some mysterious way enriched by having presented to it a few details of the customs, habits and daily routine of the past. The voyage across the Mediterranean, which was patrolled by English ships, was an anxious one for Napoleon, but he had no reason to fear his reception in France. Before leaving Egypt he had received the news that the Directory had lost Italy, and that Russia, Austria, Sardinia and Naples had declared war on the Republic, and as he travelled towards Paris in a blaze of glory diffused by his own account of the Egyptian campaign, he saw that the time had come to throw the Directory out and instal himself in their place.

His problem was to establish a military dictatorship without offending the prevailing opinion that the Revolution had made the nation free. Having reassured Paris by laying aside his uniform and spending two or three weeks in the company of antiquarians, with whom he discussed Egyptian archaeology, he arranged with Sieyès, one of the Directors, that the two legislative bodies, the Council of Ancients and the Five Hundred, should be transferred to St Cloud, away from the Jacobinical workmen of the capital. On the eighteenth of Brumaire (November 9, 1799), escorted by some cavalry, Napoleon opened his enterprise with a speech addressed to the secretary of one of the Directors. With single persons, or with troops on parade, Napoleon was always at his most effective, and on seeing this secretary, who had come to meet him on behalf of his chief, he cried out: "What have you done with this France which I left so brilliant? I left you peace, I find war. I left you victories, I find defeat. I left you the millions of Italy, I find laws of spoliation and misery." But the next day, when he tried to address the Council of Ancients, he became confused, and leaving them for the Council of Five Hundred altogether lost his self-command on being greeted with cries demanding his outlawry, and was supported almost unconscious from the hall. His brother Lucien, who had used Napoleon's reputation to get himself elected President of the Five Hundred, kept his head, collected some troops and cleared the hall, crying that the deputies had been hired by Pitt to destroy the liberties of France. By this brilliant if preposterous stroke Lucien saved his brother, and incidentally ruined himself, Napoleon, naturally enough, not wishing to be accompanied on his upward course by someone who would always recall to him how little he had deserved the cries of "Cromwell!" screamed at him by the Five Hundred.

A dictator cannot assume the title of the legitimate predecessor whose overthrow is supposed to have ushered in a happier age. Cromwell wanted the title of King, but decided finally to call himself Lord Protector, which had an Old Testament sound and so reflected the hopes he was about to disappoint; and Napoleon, on forming a government after Brumaire, called himself First Consul, which echoed the enthusiasm of the French Revolution for Republican Rome.

His work as First Consul has received unbounded praise, and it is usual to regret that he should have diverted into war the energy and organising genius which put France together after the Revolution. As well regret that a man who takes a wealthy aunt to live with him should, when she has made a will in his favour, poison her instead of continuing the attentions which had brought health and happiness into her life. A ruler obsessed by the desire for power needs an efficient country, and there is nothing in the Code Napoléon or in any other of Napoleon's civil measures to suggest that his work for France had any aim except his own aggrandisement. By re-establishing the Church he made the country priests his allies, and could afford to ignore the discontent of the higher members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, who soon realised that the Church was now only a branch of the civil service. By allowing the peasants to keep the land they had taken from the nobles he reconciled them to being drafted into his armies. By offering a career open to talent he satisfied the revolutionary passion for equality of opportunity, and by instituting the Legion of Honour he satisfied the universal passion for inequality of status. The France he created was a minutely organised bureaucracy, run with the strictest economy in money in order to facilitate the greatest possible extravagance in lives.

The external position when Napoleon became First Consul was not so bad as he painted it in his outburst on the eighteenth of Brumaire. Massena was threatened on the Riviera by an Austrian army more than twice as large as his, but the Russians were out of the war before Napoleon landed from Egypt, and Moreau was holding the Austrians on the Lower Rhine. To eclipse Moreau was as important to Napoleon as to beat the Austrians, and in May 1800 he astonished all Europe by taking an army across the Grand St Bernard and throwing himself across the lines of communication of the Austrian general. In the previous year the Russian Suvorow had taken an army over the St Gothard, a steeper pass than the Great St Bernard, and had thrust a French army across the cataracts below

Andermatt. How Napoleon would have presented this achievement to the world one can imagine from the glamour in which he invested his unopposed transit of the Great St Bernard. Swift and unexpected strokes constituted most of his genius as a general, but he was seldom a careful and never a stubborn fighter. On descending into Italy from the St Bernard he fell upon the Austrians in the illusion that they would be so much surprised as to offer no serious resistance. At four in the afternoon his army, which had been retreating for some time, began to stampede. The sudden arrival of one of his generals, Desaix, who, hearing guns, had come along to see what was happening, rallied the breaking army, Napoleon took fresh heart, and the Austrians were first held and then routed in what in future years was accepted as one of the most brilliant of Napoleon's victories, the battle of Marengo.

Some months later, Moreau's victory over the Austrians at Hohenlinden completed what Marengo had begun, and in the Treaty of Lunéville Austria gave back to France all that she had lost since Campo-Formio.

To dispose of England, Napoleon now formed a Continental coalition, the chief member of which was Paul I of Russia, with whose help Napoleon hoped to get to India. Russia, he said, held the key to Asia, and once again the dream of riding through Asia on an elephant rose before him. But for the second time this dream was dispersed by the English navy, which under Abercromby off the Egyptian coast put an end to Napoleon's design of sending another army to Egypt, and under Nelson at Copenhagen broke up the northern league against England's maritime supremacy. The assassination of Paul I, which Napoleon interpreted as an English stroke against himself, not as a Russian stroke against Paul, completed his discomfiture; he saw that he could do nothing against England till he had a navy, and he opened negotiations with her.

Fox, who concluded the Treaty of Amiens with Napoleon early in 1802, was one of those Englishmen who have enough idealism to welcome the regenerative effects of a revolution on the Continent, and enough realism to dread the impact of a war on the status quo in England. In his eagerness to pacify Napoleon he agreed to hand over Malta to the Knights of St John, he abandoned the Cape and Martinique, and he acknowledged all Napoleon's conquests except Egypt, from which Napoleon was now free to withdraw his troops, Naples, which he could reoccupy whenever he wished, and Portugal, for which he had no use now that England was in so compliant a mood. Everyone in England, Sheridan said, was glad of the Peace of Amiens, and no one was proud of it. The gladness did not last long. Although now at peace with England, Napoleon refused to

make a commercial treaty with her, for the boycott of her goods, which had been one of the chief aims of his coalition against her, was already a fixed idea with him. He further disquieted her by sending an expedition against San Domingo, a French colony which had recently been re-organised on revolutionary principles by an extremely able negro, Toussaint l'Ouverture, and was trading with England and the States. There was nothing about this expedition to support Fox's rosy view of Napoleon. One of its motives was to stop the trade with England, another was to chastise Toussaint, who had affronted Napoleon with a message of goodwill sent in a spirit of revolutionary camaraderie, a third was to re-establish slavery, which Toussaint had abolished, and a fourth was to get some of Moreau's victorious troops out of France. Meanwhile Napoleon was equipping an expedition for India, and investigating the chances of a campaign for the reconquest of Egypt. In these circumstances the English Government demurred to removing its garrison from Malta, and Napoleon, after raving at the English ambassador in Paris for two hours, sent a message to the Senate in which he said that the *exorbitant claims of England had at last exhausted his patience*. The war which now, in May 1803, reopened between England and Napoleon lasted without a break till Waterloo.

## 8

"The Channel," Napoleon said, "is a ditch which needs but a pinch of courage to jump." As early as the autumn of 1803 he had assembled enough troops for the invasion, but as they could not jump over the English fleet he exhausted his ingenuity for nearly two years in feints designed to lure the English ships out of the Channel. At St Helena he declared that he had never meant to invade England, and had used the threat only as a cover for preparing an army against Austria, which, however, could have been conquered without the expenditure of millions of francs on harbours along the French side of the Channel. By the summer of 1805, two or three months before Trafalgar dispersed his last hopes of destroying the English fleet, Napoleon resigned himself to postponing his attempt on England, and turned his attention to Austria.

The occasion of the new war against Austria was the assumption by Napoleon of the crown of Italy. He had recently become Emperor of the French, and claimed that it was inconsistent with his imperial rank to be the President of the Italian Republic which he had formed on the conclusion of the last war with Austria.

The Russians under Tsar Alexander, an emotional and erratic young

man, offered to support Austria, but the Austrian emperor would not wait for him, and the Austrians were beaten at Ulm, in southern Germany. To get to Ulm Napoleon had violated Prussian territory, and the Prussian king offered his help to the Austrians and Russians. Alexander, however, was impatient to fall upon the French, and persuaded the Austrian emperor to join with him in forcing a battle on Napoleon. The march across Germany and the victory at Ulm had put the French troops into the highest spirits, and on the night before Austerlitz the whole army joined in a torchlight dance. On the next day, December 2, 1805, Napoleon gained his greatest victory, a triumph so overwhelming that even the *Times* could find no silver lining. "The Emperor of Russia," the *Times* wrote, "is, through the signal condescension of Buonaparte, to be permitted to return to his own country, under such conditions as, we believe, a Sovereign, who was four days previously at the head of eighty thousand men, was never before obliged to submit to. . . . Incredible as this sudden and unexpected termination of the war is, we are compelled to give it reluctant credit. . . . From the Baltic to the farthest extremity of Italy there is not a Sovereign or Prince who at this moment may not be said to hold his power by sufferance from Buonaparte."

The conquest of Prussia in the year after Austerlitz was justified by Napoleon as a necessary step in his campaign against English commerce. Entering Berlin after the victories of Jena and Auerstaedt, he issued from there the decrees which declared the British Isles in a state of blockade. But while treating Prussia as a collaborator in his plans against England, he also boasted that he had now avenged Rosbach, and it was in this light that the Prussians too regarded the destruction of their armies and the immense sums they were forced to pay as a contribution to the expenses Napoleon had incurred in conquering them. Under these blows the relaxed state in which the triumphs of Frederick the Great had left the Prussians hardened, a fragment of their army joined up with the Russians, and early in 1807 withstood Napoleon at Eylau, in the severest battle he had yet fought. As he remained on the field he claimed the victory, but he had lost twenty-five thousand men. The period of his easy triumphs over opponents who preferred peace to war was ending, and the period of contests against opponents who preferred war to annihilation was beginning.

He had, however, still a long way to go before it became clear to himself or to others that he had passed his zenith. Friedland wiped out Eylau, and in July 1807 he met Alexander at Tilsit, where the two emperors, each under the impression that he had charmed the other, agreed, in the vague vast way common on these occasions, to divide the

world between them, Alexander acknowledging Napoleon's dominion over Europe and promising to join the Continental blockade, and Napoleon sanctioning Alexander's designs on Turkey. As usual, India was in Napoleon's mind, and he coupled with a joint attack on Turkey the suggestion that he and Alexander should cross the Euphrates and fall on India, but when Alexander intruded into these soaring dreams the concrete proposal that Russia should take over Constantinople, Napoleon protested, exclaiming in the hyperbolic style he now affected that Constantinople meant the mastery of the world.

## 9

Napoleon might have said of England what the Frenchman said of God, that if He did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him. He had to go on conquering, as old ladies in residential hotels have to go on talking, and England was always there to supply him with a motive. After Tilsit he turned his attention to Spain, on the ground that without the Peninsula his blockade of England would be incomplete. By the spring of 1808 he had displaced the Spanish Bourbons and put Joseph Bonaparte on the Spanish throne, but what he regarded as a conclusion was for the Spanish people only a beginning. Isolated from the rest of Europe, they were not accustomed to foreign control, and resisted it in unorganised but continuous risings, which became more formidable as English help increased. "Hitherto," said Sheridan, in a speech delivered in the summer of this year, "Bonaparte has had to contend against princes without dignity and Ministers without wisdom. He has fought against countries in which the people have been indifferent as to his success. He has yet to learn what it is to fight against a country in which the people are animated with one spirit to resist him." Arthur Wellesley was sent to Portugal, which he cleared of the invading French, and where he remained for some years, at first a far-off irritant to Napoleon, then a conscious drain on dwindling resources, and finally a scourge driving his armies across the Pyrenees.

The risings against Joseph Bonaparte in Madrid and elsewhere had their effect at the other end of Europe. Austria began to consider a new war, and Alexander showed his impatience at the postponement of the joint campaign against Turkey. To conciliate and impress the Tsar, Napoleon invited him in September 1808 to Erfurt, where he staged the greatest display of his or any other conqueror's career, assembling four kings and thirty-four reigning princes to greet the Tsar as the vassals of Napoleon, and not allowing this grand tableau to be spoiled by any scruple of conventional courtesy, for when the King of Bavaria tried to insert

himself into a conversation between the two emperors, Napoleon cut him short with "King of Bavaria, hold your tongue!"

The genius of Napoleon showed at its best in the resourcefulness with which he postponed the consequences of his folly. Sooner or later Russia, Austria and Prussia were bound to unite against him, and had he been less active and less ingenious it would have been sooner, not later. By striking at Austria before Prussia was ready to revolt, and while his cooling friendship with Alexander was still well above freezing-point, Napoleon by the autumn of 1809 had once again eliminated Austria as an immediate menace. Having occupied the Emperor's palace in Vienna, Napoleon complained to Prince Lichtenstein, the Austrian envoy, that his master was lacking in gratitude: "Lions and elephants," he said, "have often shown striking proofs of the power of sentiment upon the heart. Your master alone is not susceptible to sentiment." The Emperor was not in a position to withhold whatever balm Napoleon's wounded feelings required, and in the spring of the following year, Napoleon having in the meantime returned to Paris and divorced Josephine, he consented to the marriage of Napoleon and his daughter, Marie Louise.

His marriage with the daughter of the proudest house in Europe enraptured Napoleon, and he could justify it to himself by his need for an heir. But, except in a much less degree Joseph, Josephine alone had had the power to release him from his self-absorption, he had loved her, and the violence he had to do himself to break with her upset what little balance he still retained. Within a few months of his marriage he began to prepare for his campaign against Russia, his reason being, of course, the necessities of the Continental blockade, in which the Tsar was no longer willing to co-operate. All Europe was suffering from the blockade, sugar and coffee were almost unobtainable, tobacco at a ruinous price, and the trade of commercial countries like Holland completely ruined. Had Napoleon compensated the Tsar in any way for the loss and discomfort of the blockade, Alexander could have borne the privations of his people, but, inflated by his subjection of Austria, Napoleon no longer troubled to conciliate the Tsar. He would not proceed with their joint enterprise against Turkey, and he kept Alexander in perpetual anxiety over the Duchy of Warsaw, which he had created as the nucleus of, at some future unspecified date, a resurrected Poland.

As Napoleon could recognise power only when it appeared in a drilled and organised shape, and had no understanding of the force of national sentiment, he ignored the exasperating effect on the Poles of a nucleus which was never allowed to expand. Neither the resentments which were swelling behind him as he entered Russia, nor those which

were forming in front, weighed with Napoleon in comparison with the disparity between the two hundred thousand men commanded by the Tsar and the six hundred thousand of the Grand Army. "People will want to know where we are going," he said. "We are going to make an end of Europe, and then to throw ourselves like robbers on other robbers less daring than ourselves and become masters of India."

The success of the Russian campaign depended on nothing more complex than the willingness of the Tsar to engage Napoleon on the Russian frontier at odds of three to one against himself. Its failure followed automatically from the retreat of the Tsar into the endless expanses of his country. As the majority of people admire size more than anything else, Napoleon's loss of more than half a million men during his retreat from Moscow is beyond doubt the exploit which has most deeply impressed posterity with the superhuman range of his genius. Viewed more coolly, with a nearer approach to the temperature in which the retreat took place, the campaign illuminates the brittle foundations of his character, his reliance on bluff, his lack of foresight, and his complete self-absorption and corresponding callousness to others, a quality which ensures temporary success and final disaster.

## 10

On his return to Paris, Napoleon spent the early months of 1813 collecting out of the youth of France an army of over two hundred thousand, with which he went back to Germany to meet the advancing Russians. He won two battles, but lacked cavalry to make these successes decisive, and as Prussia was rising against him and Austria was preparing for war, he agreed to an armistice, hoping that a respite of two or three months would profit him more than his enemies.

In Egypt and in Russia he had deserted his army rather than risk his own destruction, but in the campaign which began in Saxony in the autumn of 1813 and ended at Paris in the spring of 1814 he had nowhere to flee to. At Dresden, and again at Leipzig, he fought like a tired and confused man, but when after Leipzig all Germany rose against him, and Holland declared for the House of Orange, rage restored his energy. The Allies offered peace if he would accept the natural frontiers of France, the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees, but he refused these terms, demanding of his Council of State if they wished France to descend from the height to which he had raised her, to become a simple monarchy again instead of a proud empire. In his despair he joined to the speed and brilliancy of his best years a tenacity he had not shown before, and even when the

Allies entered Paris, he was still prepared to continue the struggle from Fontainebleau. As in Italy seventeen years before, he was spurred on by private suffering, but now he could not confide in Joseph. In the weeks when he was striking in turn at the converging armies of the Allies, the late king of Spain was in Paris, consoling Marie Louise, to whom Napoleon wrote imploringly: "I say it again, keep the King away from your trust and from yourself, if you care for my satisfaction and happiness."

With him at Fontainebleau were twenty-five thousand troops, most of them old veterans. Various plans passed through his mind—to continue the fight south of the Loire, to retreat into Italy, and so on. His men, to whom he still represented the greatness and glory of life, would have accompanied him, but his marshals, whom he had turned into nobles and millionaires, wished at last to enjoy what they had so often risked their lives to secure. The Allies in Paris, informed and guided by Talleyrand, realised that the Napoleonic structure had collapsed; they demanded an unconditional abdication both for himself and for his son by Marie Louise, and gave him in exchange the sovereignty of the island of Elba, a bodyguard and an income.

Having said farewell to his guard, who wept as he kissed the colours, he set out on his journey south, alone, for no word had come to him from Marie Louise, whom he had begged to go with him. It was the Calvary of Barabbas. The rage of the people he had duped and ruined gathered strength with each mile he went. In Provence, whenever the horses were changed, a mob gathered round the carriage, yelling and throwing stones. Getting into plain clothes, and putting the white cockade of the Bourbons into his hat, Napoleon took one of the post-horses and rode ahead, from time to time making other changes in his dress, and at last reaching the coast in the uniform of an Austrian general, a Prussian cap on his head and a Russian cloak round his shoulders.

A life of study and meditation seemed to him as the ship approached his little island all that he now desired: "The sciences now, nothing more. I do not want to wear another crown. You have seen what the people really is. Was I not right to despise man?" But presently, as news came to him of the growing contempt and bitterness with which the French regarded the corpulent old Bourbon who had been hoisted on to Napoleon's throne by the enemies of France, hope and energy revived. The new government had cashiered many of Napoleon's officers and put the rest on half-pay; the returned emigrants were manoeuvring to get their estates back. As a soldier, and the people's man, Napoleon saw his chance. Leaving Elba ten months after his arrival, having first committed his mother to the care of the local authorities and assured them

of the extraordinary pleasure his stay had given him, he landed on the French coast with a thousand men. As he hastened northwards, troops were sent against him, but he conciliated them with little effort, and added them to his own force. The enthusiasm of the people gathered strength with each mile he went, fanned by the liberal and pacific sentiments he poured out in brief speeches and private talks: "War is at an end. Peace and liberty! The principles of the Revolution must be protected from the onslaughts of the *émigrés*. France will win back her glory without war. We must be content to be the most esteemed nation, without trying to dominate other countries."

Having recognised that France needed a liberal and pacific period to soothe it into acceptance of more autocracy and more wars, Napoleon on reaching Paris requested Benjamin Constant, the chief representative of French liberalism, to draft a constitution establishing parliamentary government, responsible ministers, free elections and a free press. Meanwhile the Allies, who had been quarrelling among themselves during his stay in Elba, were now once more in accord. He tried to detach Austria and Great Britain by assuring them of his peaceful intentions, but he had cried sheep too often, and they rejected his overtures. Seeing that his only chance was to beat the English and Prussians before Russia and Austria were ready, he set himself to raise as large an army as time and his depleted country would allow. Habit carried him along but his energy was ebbing, he required more sleep than usual, and indulged more than ever his love of hot baths. What perhaps chiefly discouraged him was the refusal of Marie Louise to come to Paris. He had written to her repeatedly from Elba, begging her to join him with their son, who was always in his thoughts, as the heir of his power and the justification of his toils and conquests. Now he learned that she had taken a lover, and was perfectly content in Vienna. To retrieve his wife and son he would have to conquer Europe again, with a broken sword.

There could be only one issue to such an enterprise, and though it has often been disputed who won Waterloo, it has never been denied that Napoleon lost it. Three weeks after accepting the constitution drafted by Constant, he abdicated for the second and last time.

## II

Criticising David's painting, "Thermopylae," Napoleon said: "A bad subject. After all, Leonidas was turned." Yet, as he himself was to prove, in the field of action failure, on a large enough scale, does more for a man's memory than success, which necessarily defines the narrow limits

set to all action. Hannibal touches the imagination more than Scipio, Harold than William the Conqueror, Napoleon than Wellington.

On St Helena this truth became clearer to him. "My fall," he said, "has elevated me prodigiously. Every succeeding day divests me of some portion of my tyrant's skin." In another mood he said: "I have failed; therefore, according to all justice, I was wrong." But since his conception of justice was not of so high a kind as to discourage him from trying to circumvent it, he set himself to impressing on the simple companions of his exile what Europe and freedom had lost by his overthrow, in the hope that the picture they would carry back to France of a liberal Napoleon would help his son to assume the tyrant's skin of which fate had divested him. In a codicil to his will he wrote: "I wish my ashes to repose on the banks of the Seine, in the midst of the French people I have loved so well." That might be of service to his son, but did not express his true feeling. Europe, he said not long before his death, was only a mole-hill; there had never existed mighty empires, there had never occurred great revolutions, save in the East, where lived six hundred millions of men. Even on St Helena, or perhaps especially on St Helena, in those days a port of call for ships sailing to India, the East still magnetised his imagination, the vast futility of his career having left him with no other regret than that it had not been yet vaster and yet more futile.

## *Lincoln*

### I

IN his early thirties Abraham Lincoln wrote to a friend: "I have now no doubt that it is the peculiar misfortune of both you and me to dream dreams of Elysium far exceeding all that anything earthly can realise." It was from his mother that he inherited his melancholy. Her name before marriage was Nancy Hanks, and she was the illegitimate daughter of a woman who when a girl in Virginia had borne her to a lover about whom nothing is known, but from whom Abraham came to believe that he had inherited his chief characteristics. Nancy spent her early years with relatives, in the hardship and poverty of frontier life. Dark, with little grey eyes and a prominent forehead, she was not pretty, and her escape from drudgery was through religion, with its promise of a recompense in a better world for all she had suffered in this.

Her husband, Thomas Lincoln, who proposed to her after being rejected by another girl, was never in love with her. He had had to shift for himself from his earliest years, his father having been killed by an Indian when Thomas was a baby. Hard and tough, with a good deal of suppressed conceit and resentment, Thomas Lincoln prided himself on his independence, was restless and did not care for steady employment. But in a region of uncut timber and unploughed land, wild animals and wandering Indians, the liberty he prized was little more than an abstraction, associated with the Stars and Stripes and the letting off of rifles on the Fourth of July, the day, as he explained to young Abraham, when the United States first called itself a free and independent nation.

Abraham Lincoln was born in a Kentucky cabin on February 12, 1809, but when he was a child his father, hoping for an easier life, moved on to Indiana, where conditions were still harder, and finally, still moving westwards, settled in Illinois in 1831. Nancy Lincoln died during the Indiana period, and not long afterwards Thomas married his first love, who had been a widow for some years. She was a good-hearted woman, and did her best to smooth things between her stepson and his father. Abraham, who was like an immensely elongated male version of his mother, with his father's physical strength superadded, jarred on Thomas Lincoln. According to a neighbour, Abraham could sink an axe into the wood deeper than anyone else, but by his early teens he was sick of farm-work. "The things I want to know are in books," Abraham once said

to a cousin. "My best friend is the man who'll git me a book I ain't read." He would carry a book to his work and read it during rest time, and his stepmother records that he was not energetic "except in one thing—he was active and persistent in learning—read anything he could—ciphered on boards, on the walls."

All this enraged his father, who often thrashed him. He would cry quietly when his father knocked him about, but the next day he would be reading again, or making speeches from a tree-trunk to his fellow-workers, or cracking jokes, or telling stories. Had he been insolent when his father beat him, Thomas might have minded less, but a son who wept and then did the same thing again was beyond him. "I suppose Abe is still fooling hisself with eddication," he growled, after Abraham had left home. "I tried to stop it, but he has got that fool idea in his head, and can't be got out. Now I hain't got no eddication, but I get along far berter than if I had."

Though kindly and placable far beyond most men, Lincoln was never reconciled to his father. In his slow way he was resolved from the first to develop the powers which distinguished him from ordinary men, and his father had been the most formidable obstacle to his self-development. But a deeper, though probably unconscious, source of bitterness was the sense that his unloved mother had passed on to him the inense melancholy which discoloured all his life. He must have felt that his father resented not only his intellect but even his existence, for Thomas Lincoln was much fonder of his stepson than of Abraham. When his stepson wrote to Lincoln, now a middle-aged man, that his father was dying, Abraham did not reply. The stepson wrote again; but it was only on receiving a third letter, from a female cousin, that Abraham at last answered, in a cold embarrassed letter. "I feel sure," he wrote, "you have not failed to use my name, if necessary, to procure a doctor, or anything else for father in his present sickness. . . . Say to him that if we could meet now it is doubtful if it would not be more painful than pleasant, but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join him."

## 2

"There's suthin' peculiarsome about Abe," one of his cousins said of him in his late teens. In addition to his passion for books, he had no taste for drink and cards, and, as he could not bear to take life, would not use a gun. These eccentricities might have got him into trouble with the other youths had they not been offset by his gift for telling stories and by

his enormous physical strength. He was easily the best wrestler wherever he went, and sometimes in the heat of the contest his delight in his prowess would come to the surface, as when, after throwing a particularly tough opponent, he cried out: "I'm the big buck of this lick. . . . If any of you want to figlit, come on and whet your horns."

At nineteen Abraham went down the Mississippi on a flatboat with a cargo of pork, flour, potatoes and meal, which he exchanged for cotton, tobacco and sugar. It was his first visit to slave-holding country, and he was taken aback by the terms in which traders in Negroes advertised their goods, one firm announcing: "We have now on hand a large and well-selected stock of Negroes, consisting of field hands, house servants, mechanics, cooks, seamstresses, washers, ironers, etc., which we can and will sell as low or lower than any other house here or in New Orleans." "He said nothing much," a companion relates, "was silent, looked bad," and finally remarked: "I would not be a slave, but neither would I be a slave-owner."

Denton Offert, his employer on this journey, asked Lincoln to help with a store in New Salem, which, like Chicago, was one of the many villages, small but quickly expanding, sprinkled over Illinois in 1831. The store, a cabin of logs, was built by Lincoln and Offert; and another assistant was taken on, with whom Lincoln shared a narrow bed at the back of the store. Among the men in New Salem, Lincoln's humour and prowess as a wrestler soon made him friends, but the women were less favourably impressed, one of them saying that she had never seen such an ungodly-looking gawk. "He always disliked to wait on the ladies. He was a very shy man of the ladies," a friend said.

In his spare time Lincoln went on with his reading, and practised speaking at a Literary and Debating Society, the president of which, James Rutledge, was much struck by him, and said that all he needed was culture to enable him to reach a high destiny. Encouraged by Rutledge, Lincoln announced in March 1832 that he proposed to stand for the legislature of the State of Illinois, and in the following month, partly because Offert's store was petering out owing to Offert drinking too much of his own whisky, and partly to brighten his own chances as a candidate, he volunteered for a war against Black Hawk, an Indian chief. The New Salem contingent elected him their captain. His first command was greeted with "Go to hell!"; his knowledge of drill was insufficient to get his company through a gate, so he told them to dismiss for two minutes and fall in on the other side; and his only contact with the enemy was when he saved a stray Indian from rough treatment by his own men. But he already possessed the authority of a man who,



PLATE 13. MASK OF OLIVER CROMWELL  
Said to have been taken during his life



PLATE 14. ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 1860

however easy-going in most matters, could not be shifted from any position he was resolved to maintain, and in a conflict with the officers of the regular army over his men's rations the officers gave way.

Lincoln was not elected to the Illinois legislature, but his popularity in his own town was shown by the two hundred and seventy votes out of three hundred cast for him. Opening a store with a man called Berry, he went on with his self-education, reading Gibbon and Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, and studying Blackstone's *Commentaries*, which he had come across in a barrel sold him against his better judgment by a man heading west in a covered waggon. Berry in the meantime was drinking and playing poker, debts were accumulating, and to appease some at least of his creditors and to meet his own expenses Lincoln became postmaster of New Salem, and took on various odd jobs, splitting rails, working at the sawmill, and harvesting oats and hay, shuffling along to his work in tow-linen pantaloons, a calico shirt, blue yarn socks and a shapeless straw hat, his head bent over a book. In spite of all this, or perhaps because of the contrast between his appearance and his growing reputation as a deep thinker, he was elected to the Illinois legislature in 1834.

Meanwhile he had fallen in love with James Rutledge's daughter, Ann. Ann was engaged to a man who had gone to New York, seldom wrote to her and did not reply when at last she asked him to release her from their engagement. In her unhappiness she turned to Lincoln, who was a frequent visitor to her home. On the frontier people consoled themselves either with drink, cards and fighting, or with religion. The Rutledges were religious, and spent their evenings in serious talk or in singing from the *Missouri Harmony*, a collection of psalms and hymn-tunes in which, with their ceaseless lament over the brief vanity of life, Lincoln found a soothing echo of his own dominant feeling.

In the late summer of 1835, not long after their engagement, Ann fell ill with malaria, and died within a few days. A week after her burial a friend found Lincoln wandering in the woods, muttering to himself. His friends at New Salem did their best to distract his thoughts, but he used to evade them. Walking the seven miles to her grave, he would lie there with his arm across it. In the autumn evenings he sat silent by the fire, not answering when anyone spoke to him. Once when there was a storm outside he went to the door, and opening it looked out. "I can't bear to think of her out there alone," he cried. "The rain and the storm shan't beat on her grave."

Her death plunged him more deeply than before into the isolation in which he had always lived. Naturally melancholy, with no zest for life, he was not drawn to women, nor women to him. Yet he did not belong to the ordinary type of political idealist, men of great will and little feeling, who quickly find some abstraction in the service of which they can realise their desire for power. He wanted to love and be loved, but there was something lacking or paralysed in him, the consciousness of which filled him with despair. "Lincoln told me," a friend of his at this time records, "that though he appeared to enjoy life rapturously, still he was the victim of terrible melancholy. He sought company, and indulged in fun and hilarity . . . but, when by himself, was so overcome by mental depression that he never dared carry a knife in his pocket."

About sixteen months after Ann's death Lincoln made a lackadaisical attempt to resume by letter a friendship of a vaguely sentimental kind with a girl called Mary Owens, whom he had known before he fell in love with Ann. Five months later he tried again. Life in Springfield, he said, was rather a dull business. He could not recommend it to her, but if she were willing to cast in her lot with his, he would do all in his power to make her happy.

He was now in Springfield, the new seat of the Illinois legislature, and was beginning to practise as a lawyer. Mary was with her family in Kentucky, and she and Lincoln had not met for three years, but her sister had recently told him that Mary might consider him as a suitor. Hence his suggestion that she might be willing to cast in her lot with his, on the strength of which she paid a visit to Springfield. During this visit both of them marked time, but as soon as she had left, Lincoln, apparently feeling that he was committed to making some show of ardour, wrote her a letter. "I cannot see you or think of you with entire indifference," he began, and went on to say that he wished their further acquaintance to depend on her. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to her happiness, he was sure it would contribute nothing to his. On the other hand, he was willing, and even anxious, to bind her faster, if he could be convinced that this would, in any considerable degree, add to her happiness.

This carefully worded document, which shows that he was profiting from the happy accident which put Blackstone's legal vade-mecum in his hands, did not advance matters, and after a few more attempts Lincoln abandoned his courtship. Some months later, writing to the wife of a fellow-member of the Illinois legislature, he gave an account of the whole episode in a letter which has been called everything from "grotesquely

comic" to "abominable." For various reasons the letter is worth quoting from somewhat fully. It shows the mastery of English Lincoln had achieved by his thirtieth year; its humour, if assailable on the score of good taste, is both rich and sardonic; and while the letter reveals not only his hidden self-confidence but also some surface vanity, it also illustrates his struggle to be dispassionate, his respect for the other person's standpoint, and endeavour to understand it, and his half-humorous, half-despairing acceptance of his inability to understand or please women.

After explaining that he had not seen Mary for three years, but had fallen in with her sister's suggestion that they might make a match of it, he continued: "It appeared to me that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing; but, on reflection, it occurred to me that she might have been prevailed on by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me ever having been mentioned to her; and so I concluded that, if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to waive this. . . . In a few days we had an interview. . . . I knew she was oversize, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an old maid, and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation; but now when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features, for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles, but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased. But what could I do?" He had, he went on, promised to take her, and he made it a point of honour to stick to his word, especially when others had been induced to act on it, which in this case he had no doubt they had, for he was convinced that no other man on earth would have her. So, mustering his resolution, he proposed. "But, shocking to relate, she answered, No. At first I supposed she did it from an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of her case; but on my renewal of the charge, I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before." Forced finally to abandon his suit, he very unexpectedly found himself mortified almost beyond endurance. "My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly. . . . She, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. . . . I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and

for this reason: I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me."

## 3

As early as 1843, when he was thirty-four years old, Lincoln wrote to a friend: "Now, if you should hear anyone say that Lincoln don't want to go to Congress, I wish you, as a personal friend of mine, would tell him you have reason to believe he is mistaken. The truth is, I would like to go very much." By this date he had a considerable local reputation both as a lawyer and a politician. In a country which was expanding, in area and in numbers, at an unprecedented speed, a man who was honest without being quixotic, and idealistic without being imbecile, was bound to attract confidence and support, but slowly and undramatically, and only as more excitable and more exciting figures failed to satisfy the hopes they had raised.

Slow, brooding and detached, Lincoln saw every problem as something concrete and complex, not as something abstract and simple. "The true rule," he once wrote, "in determining to embrace or reject anything, is not whether it have any evil in it, but whether it have more of evil than of good. There are few things wholly evil or wholly good." Viewing things thus, he was bound to be constantly in trouble with the cranks and fanatics in which his age and land abounded. In 1841 the Washington Society, so named in the belief that George Washington would have favoured temperance reform, held a meeting in the Methodist Church at Springfield. Lincoln, a temperate supporter of temperance reform, was one of the speakers. It was only, he said, within the last twenty years that intoxicating liquor had come to be regarded as bad in itself, apart from its abuse. The heads and hearts of habitual drunkards would bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class; and when dram-drinkers were told, not in accents of entreaty and persuasion, diffidently addressed by erring man to an erring brother, but in the thundering tones of anathema and denunciation, that they were the authors of all the vice and misery in the land, it was not wonderful that they were slow, very slow, to acknowledge the truth of such denunciations.

A douche of cold water was, paradoxically enough, the last thing his audience had expected, and as they filed out of the chapel one of them was heard to remark: "It's a shame that he should be permitted to abuse us so in the House of the Lord."

On Negro slavery, the problem which was now dividing the country, Lincoln was as far removed from the fanatics as on drink.

In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas

Jefferson had made it one of the charges against George III that he had encouraged the slave trade, "violating the most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, capturing and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere. . . ." In the final draft this charge was omitted; and when the Constitution was framed, slavery was recognised, and Congress was forbidden to prohibit the slave trade until twenty years had passed—a period which was judged to be long enough to supply the South with all the slaves it would ever need. As the labour employed on the tobacco, rice and cotton plantations of the South was entirely black, it was natural enough that Congress should be in no hurry to bring the Negro problem into line with the famous declaration: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Yet as the United States had come into being as a protest against the tyrannies of the Old World, and was supposed to represent an entirely new political form, engendered by humanitarianism in an age of reason, the recognition of slavery by the Constitution caused uneasiness from the first. Neither slavery nor Negroes are directly mentioned in the Constitution, and the same squeamishness was shown by Washington, who, writing about his slaves to his secretary, said that he was anxious to "dispose of a certain kind of property as soon as possible." Thomas Jefferson, himself a slave-owner, speaking of slavery, said: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just"; and Randolph, who liberated his slaves, said: "All other misfortunes of life are small compared with being born a master of slaves."

Even among the mass of plantation-owners there was, to begin with, a sense of guilt, allayed by the view that slavery was a necessary evil, a view not likely to lead to remedial action, since the necessity was felt by the masters, and the evil endured by the slaves. With the westward expansion of the country, the guilt of the South turned to alarm. Fearing that they would presently be outnumbered in the Senate by the free States, the slave States fought for the extension of slavery to the new territories. In the ensuing conflict anti-slavery sentiment began to grow in the North, which had previously been lethargic about the wrongs of the blacks. A young man called William Lloyd Garrison, with two assistants, one of them a Negro boy, set up a press in Boston in 1831, from which he issued appeals for the immediate and total abolition of slavery. "Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm," he wrote. . . . "Tell the mother to gradually extricate the babe from the fire into which it has fallen—but urge me not to use moderation in a

cause like the present." The Constitution, he declared, was a covenant with death and an agreement with hell; and he burned a copy of it in public. This was going too far for the majority of people, in the North as well as in the South. The South demanded that the legislatures of the free States should silence all anti-slavery agitation, whether in the press or on the platform, and limited still further such protection as their own laws gave to Negroes. In Delaware the assembling of more than six Negroes was forbidden; in Virginia a slave found with a gun was given thirty-nine lashes; and Tennessee decreed that a slave dying "under moderate correction" could not be held by the courts to have been murdered. The respectable business men in the North were no less outraged by Garrison's subversive temper. When he visited Boston he was seized by a number of citizens and led through the streets with a rope round his neck, and would have been tarred and feathered on the Common had the police not rescued him and lodged him in the city gaol. In many cities of the North the Negroes, who had always been treated with contempt, were now actively persecuted, being ejected from cars and coaches, made to sit apart in churches, and excluded from the schools.

Meanwhile an anti-slavery group, with moderate Constitution-respecting leaders, was forming, and was much strengthened during the 'thirties by the increasingly violent attitude of the South. In the House of Representatives the Southern members pushed through a resolution that no attention should be paid to any petition relating in any way to slavery or the abolition of slavery; and in the Senate they demanded that the North should cease to attack or even to discuss the institution of slavery. They also objected to the sending of abolitionist pamphlets through the post; and in 1835 the Postmaster-General, a Southerner and a slave-holder, declared that he would not compel any postmaster to deliver abolitionist mail. In the growing bitterness of the conflict, which was still further inflamed by the continuing expansion of the country towards the Pacific Ocean, with its resultant series of struggles for the new territories between the North and the South, the South abandoned its previous view that slavery was a necessary evil in favour of the view that it was a blessing to the Negroes, and in any case a much more kindly institution than the hired labour of the North.

Lincoln's attitude to slavery, as expressed in his notebooks and in speeches delivered over many years, was about midway between the extremists on each side. He denied that it was better to be a slave than a hired labourer. "There is no permanent class of hired labourers amongst us," he wrote. "Twenty-five years ago I was a hired labourer.

The hired labourer of today labours on his own account today, and will hire others to labour for him tomorrow." As to the blessing of slavery, he pointed out that although volume upon volume was being written to assert that it was a good thing, one never heard of a man who wished to take the good of it by being a slave himself. Yet, while condemning slavery, he did not join in the outcry against the villainy of the South, nor endow Negroes, to compensate them for their wrongs, with qualities which he did not believe them to possess. In a speech made in 1854, criticising Stephen Douglas's *laissez-aller* attitude to slavery, he explained himself as follows: "When it is said that the institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of in a satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them [the South] for not doing what I should not know how to do myself." Examining the various solutions which were being put forward, he questioned both the wisdom and the practicability of shipping the Negroes to some place outside America; he doubted whether it would be to their advantage to be freed and kept in the States as underlings; and he was equally doubtful whether they should be made politically and socially the equals of the Whites. The feeling of most people, he said, would be against this, his own was against it, and a universal feeling, whether well or ill founded, could not be safely disregarded. "Systems of gradual emancipation might be adopted, but for their tardiness in this I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the South." But, he went on, it would be wrong to permit the extension of slavery. A man might say that he could take his hog to Nebraska and therefore he could also take his slave. But this argument was logical only if there was no difference between hogs and Negroes. "Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giving up the old for the new faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration that for some men to enslave others is a 'sacred right of self-government.' These principles cannot stand together."

## 4

About two years after his failure with Mary Owens, Lincoln nerved himself for another attempt at marriage. A girl of twenty-two, Mary Todd, came to Springfield on a visit to her sister, who was married to one of Lincoln's closest political associates, Ninian Edwards. She was of good family, could read and speak French, a social accomplishment highly valued in her environment, and was an expert waltzer. "Style was instinctive with her; fashion was of her desires," as one of Lincoln's

biographers puts it. But she wanted something more than social success in its ordinary form—a crowd of admirers and a rich marriage. Her plump strong hands, short body, bad-tempered mouth and hostile eyes expressed, even during her brief period of youthful attractiveness, her dominating power-loving nature. She wished, she said one evening at the Edwards's, to marry a man of mind, with bright prospects for fame and power; and such a man her instinct, no doubt helped by Ninian Edwards's praise of his colleague, found in Lincoln.

To be favoured by a girl for whom a good many of the males of Springfield were competing must have pleased Lincoln after his experience with Mary Owens. But his pleasure soon died away. He did not love Mary Todd, and the reflection that by joining his life with hers he was throwing away any chance, however slight, of future happiness turned his habitual melancholy into active misery. He tried to break the engagement, but could not hold out against her distress, and the wedding was fixed for New Year's Day, 1841. The bride was ready on the morning, but the bridegroom did not appear. From Kentucky, where he had taken refuge, Lincoln wrote to a friend: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth." To the same friend, a year later, he wrote that he had lost the only or chief gem of his character, the ability to keep his resolves when made. At last, nearly two years after his flight to Kentucky, he and Mary were married. To an acquaintance who asked him on his wedding morning where he was going he replied: "To hell, I suppose."

He had, at any rate, very greatly increased the probability that he was going to the White House, for both he and Mary must have felt that only in that way could he make up to Mary Lincoln for what he had done to Mary Todd.

Her injured pride showed itself as soon as they were married in outbursts of temper which appear to have become more violent as the years passed. She was seen once driving him out of the house with a broomstick; he never dared to ask anyone home to dinner; and often he preferred to spend the night on the sofa in his office rather than go back to her. Her exasperation was fed by his slipshod ways: he used to go about the house in his shirt-sleeves; his favourite position for reading was at full length on the parlour hearthrug; his fondness for gossiping in the local stores often made him late for meals; neither by example nor precept did he try to instil good manners into their children. Most exasperating of all, a perpetual challenge to her will and reproach to her want of self-control, was his slow, calm, reasonable attitude to the

problems and vexations of life. Patient Griseldas are not formed by such men as Socrates and Lincoln.

With all this rage went a deep admiration for her husband, and the kind of love which time and habit create in most women. "Lincoln is not much to look at," she said once, "but people don't know that his heart is as great as his arms are long." She recognised, too, that there was a point beyond which she could not push him. He was, she said after his death, a terribly firm man when he set his foot down—"I could always tell when, in deciding anything, he had reached his ultimatum. At first he was very cheerful; then he lapsed into thoughtfulness, bringing his lips together in a firm compression. When these symptoms developed, I fashioned myself accordingly, and so did all others have to do sooner or later."

So far as his career was concerned Lincoln benefited from his marriage which, like Macbeth's, supplied a needed stimulus, and, as a civil war in miniature, prepared him for his future task. At the same time it intensified his melancholia, which lay too deep to be in any degree transformed or even touched by his increasing activity in politics. The nature of this melancholy has been suggested, but its peculiarly spiritless tone is best revealed in his verse, of which he composed a good deal.

A year or two after his marriage, during a political tour in Indiana, where his mother and only sister were buried, he wrote a poem with these concluding stanzas :

I hear the loved survivors tell  
How naught from death could save,  
Till every sound appears a knell,  
And every spot a grave.

I range the fields with pensive tread,  
And pace the hollow rooms,  
And feel (companion of the dead)  
I'm living in the tombs.

Forlorn and hopeless in this life, he had no sense of any other, nor with his analytical mind could he draw from the dogmas of orthodox religion an intellectual conviction which might have served as a substitute for an intuitive assurance. In religion as in politics his general ideas were taken from the rationalists of the eighteenth century. The God of his conscious mind was the overruling intelligence accepted by Voltaire and Thomas Paine as a reasonable hypothesis, but behind this efficient uninspiring figure loomed a larger shape, half the grim deity of his Puritan ancestors, half the Christ in whom he longed to believe. "Probably," he once said, "it is to

be my lot to go on in a twilight, feeling and reasoning my way through life, as questing, doubting Thomas did. But in my poor, maimed, withered way, I bear with me as I go a seeking spirit of desire for a faith that was with him of the olden time, who, in his need, as I in mine, exclaimed, 'Help thou my unbelief!'"

## 5

Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846, when he was thirty-seven years old. His party, the Whigs, had passed him over twice, and were intending to pass him over again, but, under pressure from his wife, he insisted that he should be given his turn.

The President, Polk, a Democrat, had recently declared war on Mexico. At first the Whigs were opposed to the war, but as the war fever grew and the vast new territories, Texas, New Mexico and California, which the United States eventually acquired by it, began to kindle the popular imagination, most of the Whigs became as enthusiastic as the Democrats.

Lincoln's conduct at this time has been variously interpreted. He attacked Polk for starting the war, thus alienating the bellicose Whigs everywhere, and especially in his own State, but he supported the war itself, thus alienating the pacifist group of radical Whigs. As the middle course was always the one he inclined to, he may have been acting throughout in accordance with his own sense of right. Yet his defence, in a letter to an Illinois friend, of his attack on Polk is neither clear nor complete. He had charged Polk with starting the war "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally." The war-making power, he wrote to his friend, belonged to Congress, not to the President. Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars; this was the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions, and the Constitution had been formed to prevent any one man holding the power of bringing this oppression upon the country.

This argument covered "unconstitutionally commenced," but did not explain why Lincoln was supporting a war which had been started unnecessarily as well as unconstitutionally. In public as in private life, it took Lincoln some time to reach a position from which he would not move. Until that point was reached, he could trim and finesse as adroitly as his colleagues, and his mixed attitude to the Mexican war seems largely to have derived from his desire to discredit the Democrats for starting it, and his anxiety to retain the goodwill of his constituents by supporting it.

Out of the obscurity of this episode in his life there emerges one very noteworthy speech, not much noted by his biographers, naturally enough, since it directly contradicts his later refusal to admit the right of the South to secede from the Union. Justifying the revolt of Texas against Mexico, he said: "Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. . . . Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people that can, may revolutionise and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. . . . It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines and old laws; but to break up both, and make new ones."

On his return to Illinois, Lincoln was offered an insignificant job by his party. Refusing it, he went back to his law practice, and to his domestic inferno, now hotter than ever. His failure as a politician seemed complete, and for five or six years he hardly touched politics.

## 6

The lands taken from Mexico at the close of the war stirred up the slavery question again; but for the time being the extremists on both sides were held in check by the Compromise of 1850, which allowed slavery in some of the new territories while excluding it from others. Unfortunately the Compromise included a Fugitive Slave Law which required people in the free States to aid in the recapture of slaves who had escaped from the South. Many people in the free States were outraged by this law, and in particular Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe, a woman of thirty-eight, with six children. One Sunday during church service the first chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* formed itself in her mind, she wrote it down on reaching home, read it to her weeping children and husband, and poured forth the rest of the book at the same speed. Within a year or so of its publication in 1852 it had circled the world, appearing in every country from Sweden to Japan, with the effect of greatly embittering the feeling between the North and the South, the North naturally tending to conform, however slowly, with the world's picture of it as the Negro's friend, and the South being extremely incensed at figuring in the general fancy as a land of white brutes and black Christs.

Among the men whom the rising conflict was now lifting into national prominence, the most striking to the popular eye was Stephen Douglas, a Democrat. He was an Illinois man, and an old acquaintance

of Lincoln, with whom he contrasted sharply, both in body and mind, being only five feet in height, quick and decisive in manner, a great mob orator, and also a master of detail and a first-rate administrator. The one thing he lacked was the one thing indispensable to a leader on either side in the impending conflict, a sense of the other than purely practical issues involved. His chief interest was the organisation and development of the new territories. Being neither for nor against slavery, but wishing to be supported by both sides in the coming Presidential election, he proposed that settlers should enter the territories with or without slaves, as they pleased, and that when the time came for a territory to be admitted into the Union as a State it should decide the slave question for itself. In accordance with this theory of "popular sovereignty," as it was called, Douglas in 1854 secured the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which he hoped would attract settlers to these territories, and so further a project for building a railroad from Chicago to the Pacific.

The North, however, saw this measure as an invitation to the South to flood the western prairies with slaves. Northern clergymen attacked it from thousands of pulpits; mass meetings were held in the principal cities; a Republican party, pledged to exclude slavery from the new territories, was formed to replace the moribund Whigs; and Douglas was burnt in effigy all along the line from Washington to his home town, Chicago, where when he arrived to defend himself the church bells were tolled as for a funeral, and a huge crowd howled him from the platform.

It did not take Douglas long to rephrase his position in such a way as to regain much of his hold on the masses. Early in October 1854 he was enthusiastically welcomed in Springfield, where he delivered a speech which lasted nearly three hours, the gist of it being that the right of the people to control their own affairs was at stake. On the following day Lincoln replied in a speech some quotations from which have been given earlier. After, with his usual moderation, allowing all the obstacles in the path of abolishing slavery, which he attacked as in itself a monstrous injustice, he came to what for him was the core of the matter. Slavery, he said, was fatally violating the noblest political system the world had ever seen. Douglas had spoken of the sacred right of self-government, "but if the Negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he shall not govern himself?" To re-establish the Union in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Independence would be "to make and to keep it for ever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it that the succeeding millions of free, happy people, the world over, shall rise up and call us blessed to the latest generations."

This speech, which was listened to in rapt silence except for frequent interruptions from Douglas, gave Springfield a new idea of Lincoln. "His manner," one of the audience said, "was impassioned and he seemed transfigured; his listeners felt that he believed every word he said, and that, like Martin Luther, he would go to the stake rather than abate one jot or tittle of it."

Within the next few days he delivered this speech twice again, on each occasion to an audience of thousands, and then wrote it down for publication. All Illinois now recognised that Douglas had met his match, and Douglas himself called on Lincoln, proposed a temporary truce from speech-making, and told Lincoln that he had given him more trouble than the whole opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in the United States Senate.

## 7

Douglas was disappointed of the Presidency in 1856, the more important Democrats preferring Buchanan, who was sound on slavery. This failure, coupled with the fact that Kansas, which he had hoped to pacify with the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, was now the scene of a desultory civil war between Southern slave-holders and Northern anti-slavery men, convinced Douglas that he could not indefinitely steer an even course between the pro- and anti-slavery groups. He was still, however, the favourite of the rank-and-file Democrats, and when some Eastern Republicans, led by the New York journalist Horace Greeley, offered to support his re-election as Senator of Illinois in 1858, he began to consider the possibility of becoming President in 1860 at the head of a mixed party of moderate Democrats and Republicans.

The Republican party having come into being as a protest against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, this attempt to pass Douglas off as a Republican incensed Illinois. Lincoln had characteristically taken his time over joining the Republicans, and had been a member of the party only since 1856. But he was the only man to put up against Douglas, and on June 16, 1858, he was nominated for the Senate by the Republican convention of Illinois.

The ensuing fight, although Douglas won it, greatly benefited Lincoln. In the course of it he challenged Douglas to a series of seven debates, and though Douglas was naturally unwilling to share his limelight with a comparatively unknown man, he could find no excuse for evading the challenge. By the time the debates were over, Lincoln found himself with a national instead of a merely local reputation, and

high enough in the Republican party to be considered, at least in Illinois, as a suitable candidate for the next Presidential election.

In the speech with which he opened his campaign against Douglas, and which, contrary to his custom, he read from the manuscript, Lincoln made it clear that not the abolition of slavery but the preservation of the Union was for him the main issue at stake. "We are now," he said, "far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased but has continually augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure; permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other."

Douglas in his reply called this speech an attack on local liberty, and a summons to a war of the North against the South, of the free States against the slave States—"a war of extermination to be continued relentlessly, until the one or the other shall either become free or become slave." On the Lincoln principle, he said, the Union would cease to be an association of free States, and would become "one consolidated Empire."

Politicians are often perceptive about their rivals, and this forecast proved accurate. Lincoln's policy led to the war foretold by Douglas, the war was waged with increasing ruthlessness, and out of it issued a centralised nation, destined in due course to think and act imperially.

Chance may place a man at the head of a nation in some great crisis, but only his own fitness for that position can keep him there. That it should have fallen to Lincoln, in spite of his kindly nature and hatred of violence, to unify the States as relentlessly as Richelieu unified France and Bismarck Germany, argues his fitness for an apparently incongruous task, while at the same time raising a problem a consideration of which may throw some light not only upon Lincoln but also upon the peculiar character of the United States.

Unlike the countries of Europe, the United States did not emerge slowly into a relatively civilised life out of a barbarian chaos. It was the creation of men who left the Old World because they judged it to be insufficiently enlightened for them, and who hoped in a new and unspoilt land to realise their thwarted idealism. The authors of the American Constitution, inspired by the rational Utopianism of the eighteenth cen-

tury, believed that injustice, cruelty and suffering sprang not from the imperfection of human nature but from an antiquated social system. Like Noah when he entered the Ark, and the Children of Israel when they marched into the Promised Land, they expected from a change of setting what only a renovation of themselves could have effected.

Human nature remaining what it had been in the Old World, a deep disillusionment set in, producing recognisable symptoms by about the middle of the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, the disillusioned were of two kinds. One kind contained everyone, whether cultured Bostonians reading Plato or Virginian planters reading Walter Scott, who looked nostalgically back to the lost paradise of Europe. The other kind, the chief names in which are Lincoln and Mark Twain, was drawn from the pioneers of the Middle West, and consisted of men whose sense of reality was in perpetual conflict with their inherited and inbred Utopianism. In Mark Twain, who was born twenty-five years after Lincoln and who lived through the epoch after the Civil War, the conflict ended in a collapse into unrelieved pessimism, for while he had learnt by wide and painful experience how little connection there was between the practice of his fellow-countrymen and the theory embodied in their Constitution, he was too American to fortify himself with the wisdom of a past which belonged to Europe. In Lincoln the conflict was fought at a much deeper level, and involved too much for him even to admit its existence. He had to believe in "the noblest political system the world has ever seen," or lose his one source of hope and motive to action. With many of the qualities but none of the inward illumination of a saint, he possessed no choice between complete despair and faith that the kingdom of heaven which he could not find in his own unhappy heart existed in the world around him, or at least could be brought into being in the land to which his ancestors had escaped from the oppressions and iniquities of the older world. The preservation of the Union meant for him the preservation of the dream which reconciled him to life. It was not a thing he could reason about. The detached consideration which he brought to bear on other matters was impossible to him here, his universe was at stake, and into its defence he put all the strength bred in him by his long resistance to despair, and all the deferred hopes of his wandering forefathers.

So it was that in the struggle between the industrial North and the feudal South the man best fitted to secure to the North the domination it desired was a poor white from the Middle West, whose sole aim was to save a potential Utopia from dismemberment.

As the Democrats continued to be split over Douglas, it was almost certain that a Republican would be elected President in 1860. Among the Republican candidates for nomination, the most likely choice seemed to be William Seward, who had been Governor of New York, possessed the advantages attached to a good education and social position, and had the right temperament for the chief of a great democracy, if one may judge from his remark to the English Minister, Lord Lyons: "I can touch a bell on my right hand and order the arrest of a citizen in Ohio. I can touch the bell again and order the arrest of a citizen of New York. Can Queen Victoria do as much?"

Against Seward's array of qualifications Lincoln's backers set up their candidate's far from negligible array of disqualifications, building him up, with the help of some fence rails from a farm where he had once worked, as Old Abe, the rail-splitter and backwoodsman, born in a dirt-floor cabin and now emerging out of the wilderness to speak and act for the common man. Yet in spite of all this, Lincoln, an ill-favoured, ill-dressed country lawyer, with no administrative experience, continued to be unacceptable even as a figurehead to a large proportion of the Republican party, and Seward would undoubtedly have been nominated had not Lincoln's backers, about whose methods Lincoln preferred to know as little as possible, bought the votes of another candidate, Simon Cameron, with the promise of a place in Lincoln's Cabinet. In the Presidential election, also, Lincoln's victory was by a narrow margin, the combined votes of his opponents, Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell, being so much greater than his that for some time he was known as the minority President.

The triumph of "the Black Republican Lincoln, and his fanatical, diabolical Republican party," as one Southern orator put it, was the signal for secession which the slave-holding States had been awaiting since the foundation of the Republican party. In the four months between Lincoln's election and his inauguration seven of the Southern States, headed by South Carolina and Georgia, withdrew from the Union.

Although during his election campaign Lincoln had pledged himself to respect slavery where it already existed, he had refused to consider any kind of compromise on slavery extension. Here lay the real cause of the Southern revolt. The South, a slave-owning oligarchy, was a rural community, with only one town of any size, New Orleans. It was not in tune with the new age of factories and railroads, and both feared

and despised the urban and industrial North. If slavery were permanently excluded from the new territories, the balance of power in Congress would shift irrevocably to the free States. Unless the South got out of the Union at once, and set up as an independent nation, it would be completely submerged by the North and the expanding West.

This was the Southern standpoint, and though one may not accept in full, or even in part, the South's picture of itself as a society of chivalrous aristocrats, founded on the service of humble happy blacks, and sickened by contact with the money-grubbing poltroons of the North, one must admit that the Southern case was quite as strong as the case of the American colonists against George III, or the case, so forcibly stated by Lincoln, of Texas against Mexico.

Meanwhile the North, hopeful that things were not so serious as they looked, was, on the whole, conciliatory to the seceding States; the retiring President, Buchanan, regretting in a message to Congress that Northern agitation should have at length produced its malign influence upon the slaves, inspiring them with vague notions of freedom; and Seward expressing the hope that the trouble would be over in sixty days. But among the extreme Republicans another spirit was already stirring, which found expression in such sentiments as "We of the North control the Union" and "A rebel has sacrificed all his rights. He has no right to life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness."

For Lincoln this period before his inauguration was as painful a time as even he had ever endured. The stump orators and the drunken torch-light processions which had roared and bellowed Old Abe into power were silent now, his own party, apathetic and uneasy, were ashamed of him, and from the other side letters poured in on him each day cursing him as an ape, a satyr, a negro, a buffoon, a monster, an abortion, an idiot, and threatening him with torture, the gallows and the stake—all of which, since in his heart he expected little from his fellow-men, he could have borne patiently enough had he been able to get to work. What tormented him was to have to stand by while the Union was unravelling in the feeble hands of Buchanan. "It is not of myself I complain," he said to a friend, "but every day adds to the difficulty of the situation. . . . Secession is being fostered rather than suppressed, and if the doctrine meets with a general acceptance in the border States, it will be a great blow to the Government. . . . I have read, upon my knees, the story of Gethsemane, where the Son of God prayed in vain that the cup of bitterness might pass from Him. I am in the Garden of Gethsemane, and my cup of bitterness is full and overflowing."

On February 11, 1861, Lincoln left Springfield for Washington with his wife, who was bubbling with excited anticipation, and his three sons. It was a grey morning, and in a drizzle of fine rain he said farewell to the crowd which had come to see him off, and to Springfield which he was not to see again, speaking first of the oppressive sadness he felt at leaving the place where he had passed from youth to old age, and where all his children had been born and one lay buried, and then asking his listeners to pray with him that the God of their fathers might guide and protect him in a task more difficult than that which devolved upon Washington.

He broke his journey at a number of important towns, but the nerveless speeches he delivered served merely to confirm the universal lack of confidence in his leadership.

War of any kind was hateful to him, and civil war in his own dedicated country a nightmare. He shrank from any word which might be twisted to precipitate a conflict, and, for his own sake as well as his country's, was resolved, if possible, to confine the crisis within the area of political tactics, in which he was a master. So both his personal mood and his sense of what was expedient found expression in such speeches as the one at Cleveland in which he said: "Frequent allusion is made to the excitement at present existing in our national politics. I think there is no occasion for any excitement. The crisis, as it is called, is only an artificial crisis." At Philadelphia alone, in an unprepared speech, did his real purpose and guiding belief momentarily make themselves heard, when he spoke of "that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but I hope to all the world for all future time," and affirmed that he would rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender this principle. There was no need, he continued, implicitly admitting the crisis he had hitherto denied, of bloodshed and war. There would be no bloodshed unless it were forced upon the Government. "I may," he concluded, "have said something indiscreet. But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, die by."

The last stage of Lincoln's journey formed a painful anticlimax to this speech: Warned in a letter from Seward, delivered personally by Seward's son, that there was a plot to assassinate him in Baltimore, he allowed his travelling companions to change his itinerary, and after a secret night journey arrived in Washington as unobtrusively as though he had been a commercial traveller. When the change of route was first suggested, he exclaimed, "What would the nation think of its President stealing into the capital like a thief in the night?"; nor did he ever cease

to regret that, in his own words, he had degraded himself at the very moment in all his life when his behaviour should have exhibited the utmost dignity and composure.

His enemies were exultant, plausibly charging him with cowardice, but it was not from cowardice that he had acted, for he was unusually indifferent to his personal safety. Mistrust of his own judgment was natural to him in unfamiliar situations, for the judgment of Seward he had as yet too high a respect, and in his preoccupation with the task before him, which in his confusion of mind and spirit overwhelmed everything except his passionate desire to prove equal to it, he lacked both the inclination and the strength to disregard the warning from his defeated rival and the solicitude of his well-meaning friends.

## 9

Immediately after his election, Lincoln had invited Seward to join his Cabinet as Secretary of State, and Seward had accepted, writing to his wife: "It is inevitable. I will try to save freedom and my country." On March 2, 1861, two days before Lincoln's inauguration, Seward withdrew his acceptance in a curt note which offered no explanation of his change of mind. "I can't allow Seward to take the first trick," Lincoln remarked to his secretary, and dictated a reply which made it possible for Seward to withdraw his resignation on the highest grounds of public policy and private magnanimity.

The next few weeks confirmed Lincoln in his opinion that Seward, however useful as a second-in-command, was not the leader he imagined himself. Early in February, Jefferson Davis had been elected President of the Confederate States of America, the name taken by the seceding States to distinguish themselves from the federal Government; the North took no action and Davis hesitated to strike the first blow. Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbour, was garrisoned by federal troops. As early as January 9 a steamer which tried to land reinforcements of men and stores was driven off by confederate batteries, but Buchanan ignored this incident, and Seward, in the first weeks after Lincoln's inauguration, favoured the evacuation of the fort. Most of the Cabinet supported Seward, and the decision which precipitated war was left to Lincoln, who, after a night spent in walking to and fro in his room, ordered supplies to be sent to Fort Sumter. A small federal squadron was despatched in the first week of April, and the confederate commander, notified by Lincoln that he intended to provision the fort, decided to interpret this as a hostile act and attack at once. The bombardment

opened on the 12th; the relief squadron, which arrived outside the harbour on that day, remained there; and on the next day the fort surrendered. The Civil War had begun, with the loss of one man, a confederate soldier who blew himself up while firing a salute.

A few days before the fall of Fort Sumter, Seward submitted to Lincoln a paper entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration." Having opened by remarking that the Government, at the end of a month's administration, had no policy, domestic or foreign, and having repeated his view that Fort Sumter should be evacuated, he put forward his panacea, which was, in brief, that the Government should unite the whole country behind it by a foreign war, demanding explanations categorically and at once from Spain, France, Great Britain and Russia, and should the replies from Spain and France be unsatisfactory, declaring war on them. If adopted, such a policy, Seward said, must be pursued and directed vigorously and incessantly. "Either the President must do it himself or devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. It is not in my especial province; but I neither seek to evade or assume responsibility." Recognising that Seward was still unbalanced by his loss of the Presidency, Lincoln was content to put him in his place without exposing him to the rest of the Cabinet, locking the document in a drawer and sending a short but equable reply which dismissed the project of a world war with "Upon your closing proposition I remark that if this must be done, I must do it." Henceforth he had no more trouble with Seward, who two months later wrote to his wife: "Executive force and vigour are rare qualities. The President is the best of us."

This was not, nor ever became, the opinion of Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury. A man of great force and considerable courage, Chase had frightened the border States by his open and sustained attacks on slavery, and had thus put himself out of the running for the Presidency. Two years before his own election, Lincoln, who before he knew him well called Chase the greatest of the great men he had known, said to a friend, "What's the use of talking of me for the Presidency while we have such men as Seward and Chase?"; and as soon as he was elected he offered Chase the Treasury, perceiving with his usual good sense that if Seward and Chase, the two chief men in the Republican party, were as much better than himself as they supposed, it would be both to his and the country's advantage that they should be in the Government.

Chase tried to evade the offer, and having yielded to Lincoln's insistence found himself, as he had no doubt foreseen, committed by his nature to throwing all his powers into the prosecution of the war on its

financial side. He did not dislike Lincoln, whose honesty and kindliness he recognised, but he thought him unfitted on most grounds for his position. What was great in Lincoln lay too deep to be divined by Chase, and what was visible did not inspire his respect. Well-born and well-educated, Chase was a handsome powerful man, with an ardent temperament controlled by rigidly Puritan principles. Like many Puritans of this type, he married a good deal, burying three wives, as the phrase goes, and contemplating a fourth marriage, from which he was dissuaded by his daughter on the ground that it would damage his chances for the Presidency. It was inevitable that such a man, when he compared himself with the shambling frontiersman who prefaced Cabinet meetings with Artemus Ward's latest jokes, and compared his brilliant and beautiful daughter with the vulgar, ill-tempered, self-assertive woman at the White House, should feel it his duty by all legitimate means to diminish Lincoln and exalt himself. One of his methods was to support anyone with whom Lincoln was having trouble. "He lays his eggs like the bluebottle fly, in every rotten place he can find," Lincoln once said. Another method was to hand in his resignation. Four times Lincoln persuaded him to stay on, but the fifth time he let him go, explaining himself as follows to a worried colleague: "Chase has fallen into two bad habits. He thinks he has become indispensable to the country. . . . He also thinks he ought to be President. He has no doubts whatever about that. It is inconceivable to him why people have not found it out, why they don't as one man rise up and say so. He is either determined to annoy me, or that I shall pat him on the shoulder and coax him to stay. I don't think I ought to do it. I will not do it. I will take him at his word."

Seward and Chase were, by the merciful standards of public life, honourable men. Lincoln's first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, managed occasionally to live up to his own definition of an honest politician as "one who, when he is bought, stays bought," but was more often at the level suggested by a Senator who said that Cameron wouldn't steal a red-hot stove. Having sold his votes to Lincoln's backers for a place in Lincoln's Cabinet, he ignored Lincoln's attempts to extricate himself from the bargain; but his conduct of the War Department produced so many charges of corruption and maladministration that by the beginning of 1862 Lincoln felt entitled to move him to a less visible post, that of ambassador to Russia. In a talk with a colleague Cameron dealt with the accusation that he had been making money out of government contracts while at the War Department, and his defence is worth quoting as an example of what an experienced politician in mid-nine-

teenth-century America could suppose to be a satisfying vindication of his integrity. If, he said, he had any ability at all, it was an ability to make money. He did not need to steal it. To give an instance—he had purchased at the outbreak of the war a large block of shares in a railroad which was doing badly till then, but over which, as soon as the war began, there was an uninterrupted flow of military traffic. He had, the ex-Secretary of War added, advised Lincoln to take up ten thousand dollars' worth of this stock, but Lincoln wouldn't, and there was his mistake, for the investment would have been perfectly legitimate, and he might as well have made a large sum of money as not.

Cameron's successor at the War Department was Edwin M. Stanton. It was at Cincinnati in 1854 that Lincoln and Stanton first met. Together with a Philadelphia lawyer called Harding they had been retained as counsel in an important case, and were staying in the same hotel. Their rooms adjoined, and Lincoln heard Stanton exclaim to Harding that he would not work with "such a damned, gawky, long-armed ape as that," and that if he couldn't have a man who was a gentleman associated with him in the case he would abandon it. Stanton and Harding would not eat at the same table with Lincoln, and when Lincoln, as Stanton and Harding were about to set off for the court, said, "Let's go up in a gang," Stanton remarked to Harding in a loud aside, "Let that fellow go up with his gang. We'll walk together." Lincoln had prepared his case with particular care, and, having been retained before Stanton, was entitled to speak first, but he allowed himself to be shelved by Stanton, and although he followed Stanton's speech with close attention, and was greatly impressed by it, he was so deeply hurt by Stanton's conduct that, six years later, when he was preparing his Cabinet, he would not consider Stanton for a place in it. A lawyer who had been in Cincinnati at the time was in Washington during Lincoln's inauguration, and Lincoln sent for him and said: "Mr Stanton, as you know, has been serving conspicuously in the Cabinet of Mr Buchanan, faithful among the faithless. There is a common appreciation of his ability and fidelity, and a common expectation that I will take him into my Cabinet, but you know that I could not possibly, consistently with my self-respect, pursue that course in view of his personal treatment of me at Cincinnati." Nearly a year later he sent for this lawyer again, and said: "You know the War Department has demonstrated the great necessity for a Secretary of Mr Stanton's great ability, and I have made up my mind to sit down on all my pride—it may be a portion of my self-respect—and appoint him to that place."

The war was dragging badly at the beginning of 1862. The fall of Fort Sumter in the April of 1861 had given the North a jolt, and there was a good response to Lincoln's appeal for seventy-five thousand volunteers. But three of the border States, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, joined the confederates in protest against Lincoln's mildly worded appeal, which spoke only of combinations resisting the law, shunning the word rebellion. An attempt in July by the federal forces to capture the confederate capital, Richmond, which was only one hundred miles from Washington, ended in a federal rout at Bull Run, and had the South pressed on they could have captured Washington without much trouble. But Bull Run confirmed the Southerners in their belief that the Yankees couldn't fight, and they allowed the North to pull itself together and start training under McClellan.

Some minor victories in western Virginia in the summer of 1861 had brought McClellan's name before the public just as everyone was beginning to feel the urgent need of a great general, the rumour spread that a new Napoleon had appeared, and McClellan was summoned to Washington and given command of all the federal forces. "By some strange operation of magic," he wrote to his wife, "I seem to have become the person of the land . . . President, Cabinet and General Scott all deferring to me." As usually happens when a man is rewarded beyond his merits, McClellan's amazement at his elevation was soon transformed into contempt for those who had elevated him, combined, not very logically, with an excessive estimate of his own ability. He became offhand even with Chase, who had helped him to his first command, and when Lincoln called at his headquarters would keep him waiting, and once told him through a servant that he had gone to bed. After this Lincoln used to send for McClellan, but still treated him with the greatest consideration. "I will hold McClellan's horse," he once said, "if he will win me victories."

With Stanton, however, who was not yet in office, McClellan was soon on intimate terms, and wrote to his wife that Stanton's home had become his refuge from "browsing Presidents." Later, in his disillusioned memoirs, he recorded that Stanton had nothing but abuse for the Government, always spoke of the President as the "original gorilla," and often said that Du Chaillu was a fool to wander all the way to Africa in search of what he could so easily have found in Springfield. Whether Stanton ingratiated himself with McClellan in order to bring pressure to bear on Lincoln or merely as a vent for his malice, he dropped all pretence of

friendliness as soon as he became War Secretary. Originally a Democrat, Stanton was now in close touch with the Republican extremists, who wanted a war of vengeance on the South and were making the abolition of slavery the moral issue which in all wars the party of hatred needs to disguise its true nature both from others and from itself. McClellan, a Democrat, had no feeling against the South, and disliked the abolitionists. To hold his own against the extremists he required a succession of victories, but though a first-rate organiser, very popular with his troops, and at a pinch a stubborn fighter, he was excessively cautious, perhaps because he was afraid of losing his reputation as a second Napoleon if he took to fighting. Throughout the autumn and winter of 1861 he answered every request for action with a demand for more time in which to prepare. By the beginning of 1862 the extremists were denouncing him as a traitor, and Stanton, who immediately after his appointment told a friend that he would force McClellan to fight or throw up, said to him at their first official meeting: "It is my work to furnish the means, the instruments, for prosecuting the war for the Union. . . . It is your duty to use those instruments, and mine to see that you use them."

It was at this time, just as Stanton was opening his campaign against McClellan, that Lincoln lost one of his sons, a boy of twelve. The boy was ill for some days, and one evening when Lincoln was sitting by his bed, watching his strength ebbing, he said to the nurse: "This is the hardest trial of my life. Why is it? Why is it?" Long afterwards, in a talk with a friend, he repeated Constance's words in *King John*:

And, Father Cardinal, I have heard you say  
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven;  
If that be true, I shall see my boy again.

"Did you ever," he went on, "dream of a lost friend, and feel that you were holding sweet communion with that friend, and yet have a sad consciousness that it was not a reality? Just so I dream of my boy Willie," and he bent his head and burst into tears.

A few days after Willie's death, at the close of February, Stanton persuaded Lincoln to order McClellan to make a general advance on Richmond. McClellan refused to comply with this order, and a kind of triangular duel began, in which Lincoln was sometimes ranged with Stanton against McClellan, and sometimes lent McClellan a helping hand against Stanton. At last McClellan, deprived of his position as commander-in-chief and in charge only of the Army of the Potomac, advanced into Virginia. His army was far larger and better equipped than the confederate army, and the Seven Days battle outside Richmond might

have gone in his favour had an army corps sent to reinforce him not been recalled to guard the capital, on which Stonewall Jackson was marching with a relatively small force in order to relieve the pressure on Lee.

Having failed to capture Richmond, and lapsing into his old habit of making excessive demands for men and supplies, McClellan was deprived of the Army of the Potomac, which was given to John Pope, a general who was supposed to have shown ability in the West, and who now, in the last days of August, at the second battle of Bull Run, took from Lee and Jackson the biggest beating any federal commander suffered in the war. Stanton put the blame for this defeat on McClellan, whom he accused of deliberately withholding reinforcements from Pope. With some other members of the Cabinet, he had already drawn up a letter demanding that Lincoln should dismiss McClellan from the command of any army, and when the news of Pope's defeat came through he decided to present his ultimatum.

The first effect of the disaster to Pope was to unnerve Lincoln. "Chase," he groaned to an official in the War Department, "says we can't raise any more money; Pope is licked and McClellan has the diarrhoea. What shall I do? The bottom is out of the tub, the bottom is out of the tub!" On September 2, three days after the news of the battle had reached Washington, the Cabinet met. Lincoln had pulled himself together in the interval, put the misery and indecisions of the past six months behind him, and settled the question of McClellan by himself. Arriving at the Cabinet meeting before Lincoln, Stanton, trembling with rage, announced that Lincoln had entrusted the defence of Washington to McClellan. Lincoln, coming in, confirmed this announcement, and when Chase declared that he might as well have handed Washington over to the rebels, Lincoln replied that McClellan had two things in his favour, his powers of organisation and his popularity with the troops. Stanton refusing to sign the order appointing McClellan to the command, Lincoln instructed General Halleck to sign it. A fortnight later McClellan met Lee at Antietam, which, though a drawn battle, cost Lee thousands of men he could afford far less than the North, and compelled him to abandon his invasion of Maryland and retreat into Virginia.

Antietam was the turning-point of the war. After it the South was on the defensive, and had McClellan pushed forward it is possible that he might have ended the war in a few months. At Antietam he had eighty-seven thousand men to Lee's fifty thousand, and, backed as he was by the wealth and factories of the North, his superiority in equipment over the ragged armies of the South was even greater than his superiority in numbers. But, partly because he preferred organising to

fighting, and partly no doubt because he felt that, in all the circumstances, it was not for Washington to order him about, he played into the hands of his enemies by ignoring all Lincoln's attempts to make him follow up his success, and early in November was once more, and for the last time, relieved of his command.

## II

At the beginning of the conflict Lincoln hoped to be supported by both the Democrats and the Republicans, but the unity of feeling produced by the novelty and excitement of war soon dissolved, and the Democrats, who had lost their ablest men either to the South or to the Republicans, adopted a vaguely obstructive policy which without being definitely opposed to the war made it increasingly difficult for Lincoln to keep the extreme Republicans in order. Lincoln wanted an unimpassioned war, ending in the unembittered reabsorption into the Union of the rebel States. The Republican extremists, for whom the rebel States were not estranged brothers but Democrats exposed to annihilation in the field instead of to a mere defeat at the polls, wanted a crusade, with all that a crusade implies of righteous retribution.

From the standpoint of a crusader, as Lincoln soon had to recognise, the freeing of the slaves was a far more inspiring rallying-cry than so abstract and colourless an issue as the preservation of the Union. As early as February 1862 Julia Ward Howe's poem, prophetically entitled by the editor who published it "*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*," ranked the North with Jesus Christ :

As He died to make men holy, let us die to make them free.

Lincoln might interpret this line to harmonise with his own dream of a renewed and purified Union, but to the ordinary man, whether it moved him or not, it was a call to free an oppressed race from a cruel tyranny. The effect of the *Battle Hymn's* splendid-sounding lines, springing from an ardent and ingenuous soul, grew as the war advanced :

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord :  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. . . .  
He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat ;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat :  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him ! Be jubilant, my feet !

These lines moved Lincoln once to tears, but beyond them he saw the inextinguishable bitterness certain to be created if the abolition of slavery replaced the preservation of the Union as the object of the war, with the moral pretensions of the North ranged against the outraged self-esteem of the South. The guilt of slavery lay, in his view, equally on every



PLATE 15 MRS LINCOLN



PLATE 16 ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 1863

citizen living under the Constitution which had recognised it, and its abolition ought to be an act of the Union as a whole, performed in the atmosphere of goodwill and reconciliation which he hoped would follow the victory of the North. To those who were abolitionist from sympathy with the slaves this attitude was as little pleasing as to those who were abolitionist out of hatred for the South, and at last, in the late summer of 1862, their indignation at what they considered Lincoln's obdurate indifference to the wrongs of the Negroes found vent in an open letter from Horace Greeley, entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions." To this letter Lincoln replied: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some of the slaves and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race I do because I believe it will help to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it will help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe that what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more whenever I believe that doing more will help the cause."

This reply inflamed the abolitionists still further—with some reason, for no one could infer from its tone that Lincoln had ever given a thought to the sufferings of the slaves. No doubt its coldness was chiefly due to Lincoln's desire not to fan the growing bitterness between the North and the South, yet it would be over-simplifying his feeling about the Negroes to infer that under this coldness lay nothing but a warm sympathy for an oppressed race. "I am naturally anti-slavery," he once said. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." But what he felt about slavery and what he felt about the Negroes were two distinct things. His hatred of slavery derived in part from his own observation of the squalid tyranny of the slave-traders. "That sight was a continual torment to me," he wrote of a dozen slaves shackled together on an Ohio steamboat, "and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border." But a deeper reason for his hatred of slavery was that it violated the ideal of freedom and equality which alone gave meaning to his life. Yet, he must often have reflected, to free the Negroes would remove only half the offence to this ideal. If there was, as there seems to be, something awkward and constrained in all Lincoln's references to Negroes, it sprang from his consciousness of their racial inferiority, their essential inequality to the white man. In his egalitarian dream they were an intractable fragment of reality, a huge inescapable question mark; and although their removal to another land would not, logically considered, have made

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it any easier for him to accept as a self-evident truth the proposition that all men are created equal, he was always anxious, after their emancipation, to examine any project, however impracticable, for sending them somewhere beyond the boundaries of the United States.

His reply to Greeley, unyielding though it sounded, was his final attempt to keep the issue of slavery out of the war. When he wrote it he had already outlined the Proclamation of Emancipation which, in a talk with an anti-abolitionist, he described as his last card against the abolitionists, adding that he could not be expected to give up his government without playing it. From the standpoint of political expediency, the most serious objection to emancipating the slaves was that it might alienate the border slave States which had remained within the Union, but this objection (which was met by postponing for the time being the emancipation of slaves in these States) weighed little against the advantage of presenting the North to itself, and still more to Europe, as the champion of human freedom. Before the Proclamation, which was published in the autumn of 1862, there was a constant danger that the Northern blockade of the Southern ports might bring England and France in on the side of the South. "The immense interest of England, and in a scarcely less degree of France, in the export of cotton from the South," the *Times* wrote in November 1861, "cannot but prejudice the commercial classes of both countries against a Government which appears to be the obstacle to the world's trade. In spite of the affected indifference of the Northerners to European opinion on the war, they must feel that with the growing embarrassment of our manufactures and the distress of our working classes there must be an increase of bitterness against themselves, which may produce inconvenience and even danger." After the Proclamation, liberal opinion everywhere, and especially in England, ranged itself behind the North. John Bright declared that it was now impossible for England to intervene against the North, and the working men of Manchester, though suffering greatly from the blockade, sent Lincoln a message of sympathy which in his reply he called an instance of Christian heroism not surpassed in any age or in any country.

Useful as a means to conciliating European opinion and silencing the extremists, the Proclamation, so far as Lincoln's real purpose was concerned, was a reverse that he was never able to retrieve. Henceforth the war became increasingly the crusade which he had struggled so hard to evade. As late as November 1863, when he made his Gettysburg speech, which was merely a restatement in simpler and more deeply felt language of the democratic theory embodied in the Constitution and

contained no reference to the Negroes, he was still trying to present the war solely as a measure to preserve the Union. But by March 1865, when he delivered his Second Inaugural, he had at last realised that the sufferings of a great war can be supported only if the enemy's cause is identified with the evil in life, and one's own cause with the good. His theme was now the sin of slavery, and although his real feeling was expressed in "He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to them by whom the offence came," the part of his speech which the majority of his listeners would respond to and remember laid, or seemed to them to lay, the guilt of the war, and the burden of its expiation, on the slave-owning South: "Fervently do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsmen's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

## 12

An old acquaintance who had not seen Lincoln for some years described his appearance at the close of 1862: "The change was simply appalling. His whiskers had grown and had given additional cadaverousness to his face. . . . The light seemed to have gone out of his eyes, which were sunken far under his enormous brows. . . . There was over his whole face an expression of sadness and a far-away look in the eyes, which were utterly unlike the Lincoln of former days."

McClellan's successor, Burnside, had just been routed at Fredericksburg, losing over twelve thousand men to Lee's four thousand, and the problem of finding a general able to cope with Lee and Stonewall Jackson seemed more insoluble than ever. A few months later, in May 1863, Hooker, who had succeeded Burnside, was defeated by Jackson at Chancellorsville, and Lee crossed the Potomac, but without Jackson, who was killed at Chancellorsville, and with only half-hearted support from Jefferson Davis. At the beginning of July he was beaten in the three days' battle at Gettysburg, and in the same week Ulysses Grant captured Vicksburg, a stronghold on the Mississippi through which the South had been drawing supplies from Europe by way of Mexico and Texas. The Mississippi was now entirely under Northern control, and Lincoln expressed his relief in a famous phrase: "The signs look better. The Father of Waters flows again unvexed to the sea."

Blockaded on all sides, the South fought desperately on against

always increasing odds in men and material. Their losses were immense. In the two great battles of the autumn of 1863, Chickamauga, a victory, cost them sixteen thousand men out of fifty-seven thousand; Chattanooga, a defeat, nine thousand out of thirty-four. A respite of some months, during which the Northern armies were being reorganised for a decisive effort under the supreme command of Grant, allowed the South to scrape up fresh reserves, and in May 1864 Lee met Grant in the Virginian Wilderness. In Grant, Lincoln had at last found someone as tenacious in war as he was in politics. Compelled some years earlier to leave the army because he drank too much, a failure in farming and business, saved from destitution by a job in the family store, and grudgingly readmitted into the army in 1861, Grant threw off his melancholy and inertia in the presence of a task which challenged his hidden stubbornness, and, though for a time handicapped by his previous record, strengthened Lincoln's growing confidence in him by his capture of Vicksburg, and confirmed it five months later at Chattanooga. Stubbornness, however, though not his only merit as a general, was by far his most remarkable. The easy victory which Washington expected when Grant set out at the end of April 1864 was still out of sight at the beginning of July. In the first two days of the battle in the Wilderness he lost eighteen thousand men. A few weeks later, at Cold Harbour, he lost six thousand men in one hour, and thirteen thousand before the battle was over, and by the end of June his total losses exceeded the whole of Lee's army at the beginning of the campaign. Confident in his large reserves, he remained imperturbable, declaring "I am going to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

Once again Lincoln was back where he had been before Vicksburg raised his hopes and Chattanooga strengthened them. During the first week of the battle in the Wilderness, when the news of Grant's appalling losses was coming in, he scarcely slept at all. "On one of these days," narrates an inmate of the White House, "I met him, clad in a long morning wrapper, pacing back and forth a narrow passage leading to one of the windows, his hands behind him, great black rings under his eyes, his head bent forward upon his breast—altogether such a picture of sorrow, care, and anxiety, as would have melted the hearts of the worst of his adversaries, who so mistakenly applied to him the epithets of tyrant and usurper."

Step by step the dream he had been pursuing had led him further from his early principles and beliefs. Against his view that the war-making power belonged to Congress, not to the President, he had started the war on his own initiative, and had called for troops, declared a blockade,

appropriated millions of dollars from the United States Treasury, suspended Habeas Corpus, and enforced conscription, all without asking Congress. Viewing the situation from the standpoint of common sense, he knew that as he was extremely unpopular in Congress, not only with the Democrats, but also with his own party, some of whom cursed him as a tyrant while others derided him as an imbecile, he could not respect the Constitution if he meant to keep the war under his own control. Yet if the Constitution could function satisfactorily only when no great strain was put upon it, if the nation's representatives were to be allowed a say in matters only when there was nothing of particular importance to be said, what was meant by government of the people, by the people, for the people? To this question he could reply only that, even in a democracy, there were occasions when the end justified the means; that he, not Congress, embodied the people's will; and that he must break the Constitution in order to save it—pleas which he cannot have been ignorant had in one form or another been advanced by every autocrat in history.

If, as may reasonably be assumed in so reflective a man, his thoughts reached this point, an impassable barrier prevented them from going further. He could allow himself some doubts about the way in which he was conducting the war, he could not allow himself any doubts about the war itself. During these years he often read Shakespeare. *Macbeth* was his favourite play, and his favourite passage outside *Macbeth* was the soliloquy of Claudius, in which he cries:

O limed soul that, struggling to be free,  
Art more engaged.

From the opposite starting-point Lincoln had reached the same place of torment as Claudius and Macbeth. To safeguard his political Elysium he had, against his instinctive disbelief in violence, chosen war, as Macbeth and Claudius, for the sake of power, had chosen murder, and like Claudius he had found that struggling to be free he was more engaged, and like Macbeth might have cried, as he paced up and down the narrow passage, thinking of the thousands who had fallen, and the tens of thousands still to fall:

I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

What the promises of the Three Witches were to Macbeth, the promises of the Constitution had been to Lincoln, who now in the fourth year of the war was prepared to exterminate the whole of the South rather than allow it to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness outside the framework of the Union.

"Thus war," he said in a brief address delivered while Grant was recuperating after the battles in the Wilderness, "has taken three years; it was begun or accepted upon the line of restoring the national authority over the whole national domain, and for the American people, as far as my knowledge enables me to speak, I say we are going through on this line if it takes three years more."

His claim to speak for the American people, outside the Southern section, was now a strong one. They had learnt to recognise his integrity, and knew how accessible he was to everyone in trouble, and how often he had refused, in spite of the anger of his generals, to counter-sign death-warrants on private soldiers. Whatever his motive for continuing the war, they felt it to be an impersonal one, not actuated by any desire for glory or delight in battles fought by others. To the army he had ceased to be Old Abe and become Father Abraham, and once when he made one of his many calls for fresh troops he was answered in a song with the refrain "We're coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong." Shortly after Lincoln's assassination, an old soldier whom Walt Whitman was visiting in hospital said to him: "The war is over, and many are lost. And now we have lost the best, the fairest, the truest man in America. Take him altogether, he was the best man this country ever produced. It was quite a while I thought very different; but some time before the murder, that's the way I have seen it."

The chief writers in the country had also come round to Lincoln. Towards the end of 1863 Lowell wrote in the *North American Review* of "the good sense, the good humour, the sagacity, the large-mindedness, and the unselfish honesty of the unknown man whom a blind fortune, as it seemed, had lifted from the crowd to the most dangerous and difficult eminence of modern times." Emerson, in his mild way a zealous abolitionist, revised his previously not very favourable view of Lincoln after the Proclamation of Emancipation, and after Lincoln's death wrote: "If ever a man was fairly tested he was. . . . In four years—four years of battle days—his endurance, his fertility of resources, his magnanimity, were sorely tried and never found wanting." Whitman, less generalised and more searching than Emerson and Lowell, noted with the detachment of a profound interest "the subtle and indirect expression of this man's face," and mourned his death in the simplest and most moving of his poems.

Yet, in spite of all the recognition his great qualities had now won, it was only at the last moment that Lincoln's re-election as President in the autumn of 1864 became a certainty. Much as they disliked him, and though from time to time they made attempts to provide him with a

rival, the Republicans knew that he was the only leader under whom their party could remain in power. But at the close of August 1864, with Grant still held by Lee and Sherman blocked in his advance on Atlanta, the general weariness of the war was so intense that the Democrats felt their chance had come, and nominated McClellan to secure a negotiated peace. Lincoln had foreseen this step, and a few days earlier wrote a memorandum embodying his policy if McClellan were elected. "This morning," it ran, "as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his on such grounds that he cannot possibly save it afterwards."

This memorandum he requested his Cabinet to sign without reading, a singular proof of the ascendancy he had acquired over his colleagues, and also of the small confidence he had that his expectation of being defeated would not be disclosed by one or more of them to persons who would use it to assist his overthrow.

Lincoln was saved by Sherman's capture of Atlanta in the first week of September, and by Sheridan's destruction of the confederate army in the Valley of Shenandoah, which he wasted so thoroughly that it was said a crow crossing it would have to carry rations. The policy of the Northern commanders now was to destroy the resources as well as the armies of the South. "If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty," Sherman wrote to Washington, "I will answer that war is war, and not popularity-seeking. If they want peace, they and their relatives must stop the war." Leaving his base at Atlanta against all military rules, Sherman set out for the sea in the middle of November with sixty thousand veterans. "I can make the march, and can make Georgia howl," he wrote to Grant. Burning and destroying everything in his path, amid the premature rejoicing of the Negroes, who now for the first time saw their Northern deliverers, Sherman reached the sea in the second week of December, with a loss of under a thousand men:

How the darkeys shouted when they heard the joyful sound!  
 How the turkeys gobbled which our commissary found!  
 How the sweet potatoes even started from the ground,  
 While we were marching through Georgia!

As the end of the war drew near, Stanton, according to an old acquaintance, "became drunk with power and fairly rioted in its enjoyment." Of the two generals whom there was a danger the public might value

more highly than himself, Grant had proved unassertive and easy to manage, and Sherman, who despised him, he was waiting to discredit through the press at the first convenient opportunity, which was not long in coming. Among the politicians there was no one, now that Chase was out of the Cabinet, whom he had reason to fear as a rival should Lincoln die. The Vice-President, Andrew Johnson, who in the event of Lincoln's death would automatically become President, would be Stanton's nominal superior, but Stanton was confident that Johnson would deal with the South as he and the Republican extremists directed.

The illusion that he could manage Lincoln had long since vanished. During their years together he had often treated Lincoln almost as insolently as at Cincinnati, but his bullying had got him no further, Lincoln accepting it as a man determined to carry out an itinerary accepts the unpleasant but unimportant fact of bad weather.

When Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural at the beginning of March 1865, the South, though still fighting hard, was nearing collapse. On April 3 Richmond fell, and on the 9th Lee surrendered to Grant. Two days later, to an exultant crowd gathered in the grounds of the White House, Lincoln read a statement embodying what he hoped the country would approve as the right attitude to the seceded States. There was no necessity, he said, to consider whether these States had been out of the Union—"Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union, and each for ever after innocently indulge his own opinion whether in doing the acts he brought the States from without into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it."

For Lincoln the war was over, but the demon he had raised was not destined to be transformed into an angel overnight. The Republicans had not waged a long and bloody war in order to be swamped by the return to Congress of the Democratic South. Lincoln's subtlety and tenacity, and his prestige with the army and the people, were great obstacles, but they were resolved to fight for the continued control of the country, now centralised by the war effort, and they were also resolved to take vengeance on the defeated enemy.

On April 14, the last day of his life, Lincoln held a Cabinet meeting, which Grant attended. Grant having expressed some uneasiness about the absence of news from Sherman, who was still fighting in North Carolina, Lincoln said there was no need for anxiety. The previous night he had had a dream which he had dreamed before all the great events of the war, and which he looked upon as a good omen. "I

seemed to be in a singular and indescribable vessel, but always the same, that was moving with great rapidity towards a dark and indefinite shore. Before landing, I awoke." Turning to the problem of reconstruction, he said he was glad Congress was not sitting; if they were wise and discreet, they could reanimate the States and get their governments in successful operation, with order prevailing and the Union re-established, before Congress met again in November. He hoped there would be no persecution, no bloody work. None need expect him to take any part in hanging or killing even the worst men on the opposite side. "Frighten them out of the country, let down the bars, scare them off," he said, throwing up his hands as if scaring sheep.

Stanton, arriving late according to his usual practice, outlined a plan of reconstruction which in its final form, reached two years later, proposed to dissolve the Southern States and divide them into districts under military governors appointed by the commander-in-chief. The Secretary of the Navy, Welles, an able and honest man and a great admirer of Lincoln, at once and vehemently attacked Stanton's plan, but Lincoln averted a dispute by asking Stanton to furnish a copy for future discussion, and the meeting then adjourned.

In the afternoon Lincoln took a long drive with Mrs Lincoln. He spoke of their past troubles, the war and Willie's death, but his mood was serene: "The war is over, and with God's blessing we may hope for four years of peace and happiness, and then we will go back to Illinois and pass the rest of our lives in quiet. We have laid by some money, and during this time we will save up more, but shall not have enough to support us. I will open a law office at Springfield or Chicago, and at least do enough to help give us a livelihood."

Lincoln had arranged to attend a performance at Ford's Theatre that evening, and earlier in the day called at the War Department and asked Stanton to let him have his chief assistant, Major Eckert, as his escort. "I have seen Eckert break five pokers, one after the other, over his arm," Lincoln said, "and I am thinking he would be the kind of man to go with me this evening. May I take him?" Stanton refused, on the ground that he had important work for Eckert that night. As Lincoln was taking his wife and a friend with him, he was more persistent than was usual with him in personal matters, and went along to Eckert's room, but Eckert, who went home that day at his usual time, said that he had work which would keep him late and which could not be put off. "Well, then, I shall take Major Rathbone along," said Lincoln, "but I should much rather have you, Major, since I know you can break a poker over your arm."

The motives of Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, who was killed by the men Stanton sent after him, have remained obscure. The brother of a famous actor, and himself an actor, he was intensely vain, and the desire to overshadow his brother may have played some part in a performance which he made as theatrical as possible. Entering Lincoln's box, with no opposition from Major Rathbone who was seated furthest from the door, Booth shot Lincoln through the head, leaped down on to the stage and, brandishing a knife and crying "*Sic semper tyrannis*," vanished through the flies.

At about the same time an attempt was made on Seward, who was ill in bed, but the assassin, after stabbing Seward in the throat and face, was overpowered by Seward's son. If, as the press under Stanton's direction declared, the assassins were agents of Jefferson Davis and other Southern leaders, Stanton, as the most important man in the Government after Lincoln, should also have been among the victims; and so he would have been, according to his own account, had his doorbell been in working order. The bell-wire, it seems, had been broken a day or two before, and the bell-hanger had been too busy with other commissions to attend to it. The assassin had rung, and, no one answering, had gone away. Why Stanton had borne himself so meekly with the recalcitrant bell-hanger, and why the assassin had been so socially sensitive as not to gain admittance by knocking, Stanton did not trouble to explain.

Lincoln died without regaining consciousness in the early morning of the 15th, and later in the day the Republican extremists held a meeting in which they described the assassination as a gift from Heaven. This was also the view of a number of prominent preachers. One of them said: "I will not positively assert that his policy towards traitors was so much too lenient that God replaced him by a man who, we have good reason to think, will not err in this direction. Yet I say this may be, and it looks like it." Another said: "God has a purpose in permitting this great evil. . . . It is a singular fact that the two most favourable to leniency to the rebels, Lincoln and Seward, have been stricken." According to a third: "Abraham Lincoln's work is done. From the fourteenth of April his work was done. From that time God had no further use for him." ¶ Such were the figures on the dark shore, no longer indefinite, towards which the strange vessel of Lincoln's destiny had borne him, but to the dreamer himself the dream had proved a good omen, since before he landed he awoke.

